



PHD

Bridging incommensurable paradigms: a training consultant recovering the wholeness of being human

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Award date:
1995

Awarding institution:
University of Bath

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**BRIDGING INCOMMENSURABLE PARADIGMS:
A TRAINING CONSULTANT RECOVERING THE
WHOLENESS OF BEING HUMAN**

**Submitted by Jill Treseder
for the degree of PhD
of the University of Bath**

1995

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Treseder', with a stylized, looped initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Abstract

The thesis charts my development as a facilitator of personal development groups mostly in commercial settings. My initial focus was at the interpersonal level of learning to develop the confidence to respond faster and more creatively to challenging situations in groups. This extended into a concern about the dilemma of students who welcomed an approach that valued feelings and open behaviours, and took them back into their organisations, only to encounter resistance from cultures which were both task oriented and closed, and hostile to such changes.

A central part of the thesis, and of the whole experience, has been uncovering, accepting, exploring, and articulating my own ways of knowing or making sense of experience which are deeply rooted in the preverbal, kinaesthetic, and imaginal modes of being. Not only were they difficult to articulate, but they seemed inadmissible because socialisation and education had taught me at best not to value them, at worst to be ashamed of them. Acknowledging these sources of wisdom was releasing, and led to the emerging sense of a spiritual journey.

Methods I have used include dialogues with other facilitators and students of courses; journalling which has been of major importance; attention to, and analysis of, personal processes of knowing and development. The thesis represents a number of different voices, both mine and others'; inner and outer; expressing intuitive knowing, intellectual understanding, and practical experience.

To outline the contents:

Section 1 Introduction

Section 2 Why? (Chapters 3 and 4) examines my reasons for doing research, considers the question "what is thinking?", and introduces the theme of spiritual development. It also includes two key literature reviews.

Section 3 How? (Chapters 5 to 8) addresses epistemology (including female ways of knowing), methodology, and validity.

Section 4 What? (Chapters 9 to 15) represents the content proper, including my early experience of facilitating groups; the nature and function of transitions in my work; and explorations of my relationship with men; of personal progress and methods in becoming more emotionally competent; of personal presence; of feminist writing and the complexity of patriarchal oppression; and of energy, sound, and voice.

Section 5 Conclusion

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Chapter 1

Preface — roots in childhood

It is hard to say when a piece of research begins, just as it is hard to pinpoint the beginning or the ending of a relationship with another person. In conversation we tend to refer to beginnings and endings as events, whereas we know, through lived experience, that they are processes. I find that the length of such processes stretches with my increasing retrospective perspective, as I see the beginning seeds further and further back in the sequence of "events". Sometimes I wonder if I am imagining those early seeds, and it is rare to get the sort of corroboration that I found in the summer of 1993, for the belief that I had been moving towards this thesis for a large part of my life.

What I found was the first piece of recorded evidence, which showed me that this research did not begin in 1987 in a car park in Bath, but on a windswept headland in West Wales in January 1958. This unusual piece of data consists of some pages which came to light when I was searching through old letters. A journal entry describes the discovery:

I found an important and extraordinary document today. Its impact is only just filtering through 12 hours later.

I woke up quite early to sun and blue sky and got straight up and cleaned my bedroom windows and washed all the crystals and hung them back up to make rainbows in the sunlight. Then I cleaned the whole room ...

Then I came across it. 2 folded pages A5 size covered in blue ink handwriting. It's a message from me aged 13 to the adult me, very carefully dated almost like a will... Very solemn and serious and guarding against the probability?/possibility that as an adult I will have forgotten the "other world", reminding me to stay true to it, come what may. Describing the feelings.

Journal 13th August 1993

The pages are headed "*Lovely feelings belonging to the other world*". Some of the feelings my thirteen year old self describes are:

"the feeling of being thirsty and wanting a lost drink. Lost because you are too old."

"the feeling in your bottom tummy when you watch the sea very rough and grey."

"the feeling something has happened in exactly the same way in the same place and in the same circumstances, somewhere before."

"the feeling of going back"

"the feeling of infinite joy, subdued sweet grief of going back"

My young self clearly thought that the adult me would need some explanation of the concept of "going back". Two passages in square brackets attempt to describe it:

[You go back as far as you can go back now, when you experience all these feelings.

Sometimes perhaps you go right back when alone in a special moment. But you must not be disturbed suddenly or you have lost it forever.

[Perhaps you get a glimpse of what you vaguely remember happened in childhood i.e. the "other world" when grown up, when you smell a fresh rose, the first one. You try to remember but it would elude you apart from a feeling.]

Letter to myself January 1958

The notion of "going back" seems key to the question of why I wrote these two pages. It seems that I had identified something I judged infinitely precious at a time when it seemed to be under threat. The threat I think was two-fold. Partly it was under threat from the adults in my life and their (adult) way of seeing the world, especially in the public school regime I had recently entered. Partly I could see myself standing on a threshold, not so much aware of a door opening ahead of me, but of the door of childhood closing irrevocably behind me. At that time I was still able occasionally, and with an effort of will and imagination, to hold that door open. It seems as if, before it closed for ever, I wanted to get a message out to the adult me to save myself from becoming like all the others who had lost all touch with the "other world":

This is all to remind you when you are grown up and getting staidier. The "other world" is an imagination dreamland or of the past. If you think hard you will get a feeling like familiar strange childhood, and think harder still and you may get a glimpse of it. Read these notes to remind you ... Don't get old. Enjoy your youth again and get a sweet sad breath of the lost past. This was you writing this in Jan 1958. You are still yourself.

Letter to myself January 1958

This perception of myself on that threshold is reinforced by the content of a diary of that year: having honoured that "other world" it seemed that I then freed myself to move forward, away from childhood, recording a number of "firsts" as I venture into a more adult world.

Some of the words I used make me cringe, but I would not expect to use the same language at thirteen as at fifty. However, much of the embarrassment is nothing to do with style, but with the familiar difficulty about exposing intimate thoughts and feelings that I still have. My response to reading these pages is one of respect and gratitude: respect that, at thirteen, I honoured this inner knowing and my conviction of its importance enough to write the letter; and gratitude at the deep sense of being cared for by my young self and entrusted with her wisdom. She was truly a messenger *"from a world we once deeply knew, but we have long*

since forgotten" (Miller 1984, xi). There is also present a great sense of relief that I have not betrayed that self, and feel worthy of the letter because I *have* remembered the "other world", and have made a commitment to take myself seriously in that context. This thesis is evidence of that commitment.

Chapter 2

Introduction

This is not a traditional thesis and is unusual in its content, form and style, and approach to the ideas of other people in relevant literature. In this chapter I aim to map the territory by addressing each of these issues, and then to provide some signposting by summarising the sections and the purpose of each chapter.

We fear our highest possibilities. We are generally afraid to become that which we can glimpse in our most perfect moments, under conditions of great courage. We enjoy and even thrill to the ... possibilities we see in ourselves ... And yet we simultaneously shiver with weakness, awe and fear before these very same possibilities.

Maslow 1954

Content

This section describes the original starting point of the research, and then goes on to explain how the title evolved.

The Original Research Question

The original idea for my research was seeded during a discussion where I was not present. The Bath Research Group was debating the issue of what to do when distress emerges in a group whose purpose is not to attend to distress. It was suggested that someone should be researching the whole issue, and the process of persuading me started in the car park after the group finished. Realizing that the question was a pivotal one, and that my success as a professional facilitator depended on finding an answer to it, I was less resistant than might be expected.

Extreme alternative solutions to the problem are to abandon the group's agenda and to work with the distress; or to ignore the distress and pursue the agenda, with all stages in between. The first alternative raises issues of who should, could, or would take this initiative; whether they have the awareness, attention, skill and/or a warrant to do so; and whether it is appropriate. It also raises the question of the attention, awareness, and emotional competence of the whole group. The second alternative aims to get the business done, but runs the risk of having the agenda sabotaged awarely or unawarely by the unresolved emotional agendas, both of the original distressed person, and of others experiencing discomfort, at either the distress, or the manner of handling it.

My work as training consultant at the time involved regularly facilitating groups of professional people in personal development which, by nature of the content (personal

awareness, assertive communication, presentation skills, time management, and team building), triggered the full range of emotional responses. I wanted to be able to maintain clarity and balance in the face of anything I might encounter in such groups. I saw myself being at worst paralysed by tensions in a group; at best slow, finding the response I wanted hours, days or even weeks after I needed it. My main concern was to find a way of narrowing the gap between a critical incident in a group and finding an effective response.

My ultimate aim as a human being and a facilitator was, I suppose, to reach a state of fearlessness, where I could go with confidence into any situation, and be so centred and grounded that, whatever happened, I would not be thrown. I realized that in order to reach this state I would have to examine the situations which made me fearful, and face problems and resistance within myself, neither of which would be comfortable.

In retrospect I see wider and deeper reasons for engaging with research which were unconscious at the time, and which concerned the *highest possibilities* to which Maslow refers above. For this research has turned out to be a continuation, at a very deep level, of the personal growth I first embarked upon in 1983 when I discovered co-counselling. For this reason the research journey has brought many changes of direction, and many surprise destinations. I have been drawn into areas of inquiry which amazed me, and which may also come as a shock to you, the reader. One surprise has been the extent of personal process I have gone through, and the amount of that which I have judged it necessary to include in the writing, which leads me to add a health warning that this thesis may embarrass some readers.

Explaining the Title

A paradigm is a way of looking at the world, a system for understanding experience based on some sort of organising principle. A person may hold a single or multiple paradigm view, and in the latter case may switch between paradigms as if changing spectacles. A paradigm may be held lightly, coherently, inconsistently, rigidly ..., just as any opinion may be held.

Paradigms are incommensurable when there is no overlap between them to form a basis for the exchange of meaningful information. People may be unaware of the existence of a paradigm outside their own, and/or they may be closed to the notion of a multi-paradigm world, and unwilling to entertain the possibility of paradigms being complementary. Such mutually exclusive territories occur between groups, between individuals, and within a single psyche, for example, in integrating new ideas, or in the attempt to bring a dream into consciousness. In retrospect I see that the first incommensurable paradigms I encountered were those held by my parents, my father's relying on logic, my mother's on intuition as an organizing principle.

Early in the research the image of a bridge emerged as a clue to, or metaphor for, what my research was about. This imagery was useful, evocative, and held meaning, so I used it and respected it. It also change during the research. The Bridge metaphor first emerged because, as a group facilitator, I encountered a number of conflicting paradigms within and between people, and saw myself acting as mediator to find ways of communicating across these divides. Thus “bridging” started out as a quest to find a way of travelling back and forth. Next the bridge became an end in itself, a transitional space, and a vantage point for seeing other potential common ground. Eventually, as described in the final chapter, it led away from the need to make paralysing “either ... or” choices to an understanding of the underlying wholeness of connection.

The metaphor first emerged from a number of waking visualisations in which I sought to explore the facilitator role, and in which I saw myself as a bridge. This became fundamental to my view of both the facilitator and researcher role.

One example of a divide that needed bridging was that between my intentions as a facilitator, and the students' expectations of the course. Often this not only involved differing expectations of trainers and training, but different views of the world and how human beings behave. Another potential divide was the clash between the enthusiasm of students with new learning returning to the work environment, and that environment's hostile reception of them.

As a training consultant, my interest and concern has been to convince people in organizations of the importance of attending to feelings. This is not only because I care about people and the quality of their experience, but because I believe that it is the best route to high productivity. I further believe that spreading the practice of caring for people and quality of life into powerful places is part of achieving more ethically run organizations and increasing the chances of the planet being cared for too. These issues call for powerful bridgework.

The following journal extract is the first of a series of waking visualisations of “myself as bridge”, and clearly reflects my feelings of uncertainty about the role.

I am a bridge ... made of thin, bluish-white steel; have very long thin legs, high narrow arches; I am bendy; the steel isn't thick enough, so I am wobbly and precarious; ...

It's cold and windy up here and I am frightened of falling as I wave about. I remember that tall buildings are safer if they give and rock in the wind, but this doesn't feel like that, because there is no strong, still centre to come back to. I become more and more elongated, and now there is only one arch, very tall and thin. The ground is marshy and gives me no firm foundation. I am not achieving what I have to achieve. I have to reach out and span that gap, right out over there beyond the marshes, with a wide span, not this silly narrow high one.

I wasn't so tall and useless at the start, I had more legs, and was nearer the ground, but the legs were waving about aimlessly not knowing where to come down.

But I am steady now and the tall thin struts are stronger and thicker and not bending in the wind. But I am not a bridge to anywhere. My second strut comes down so close to the first. It is just a loop, like a hairpin. If anything heavy were to weigh on me I would sink into the marsh, maybe disappear altogether.

Journal 20-12-88 On Being A Bridge

A second visualisation about eighteen months later relates to the research role, and reveals a very different kind of bridge:

... it is solid and rustic, strongly constructed out of larch poles ... and very dark brown. ... upstage left there is a big, wide, light bridge carrying a noisy, six-lane highway. ... My bridge is hiding in a shady, shadowy, dark place, ... almost growing, almost merging with the earth. ... But I think it doesn't go anywhere. It just stops and fades into the darkness a few feet out.

This bridge seems to have acquired a strong, still centre which was missing earlier, but I comment on the fact that this bridge isn't going anywhere. I relate that to the fact that I was feeling stuck about the research at that time:

The fact that it is in such a secret place seems to reflect the [personal] things I am working on following the William Emerson [rebirthing] workshop. The fact that it is there in the shadows hiding from the six lane highway and the noise and danger feels right and fine. But the fact that it isn't leading it's own quiet way into the sunshine is what I feel stuck about.

Every strand I follow leads me back to me. It's beginning to feel narcissistic? incestuous? — not either of those things, just that I can't seem to turn the direction back out again, and move it on ... It is as if I am hypnotised by the metaphor.

At some level I can see the sunlit meadow where I will arrive, and have no doubt of getting there. And I am OK digging away in the shadows. ... I have a sense of digging and discovering other roots interwoven with mine.

Just struck me how I am spending today — partly in the garden, weeding and grubbing in the roots of ground elder, spreading compost, watering; then when I get too hot, coming in to the shady cool house and doing some writing or talking to friends on the phone. Sun, water, roots, earth; dark and light; very elemental.

Writings May 1990

After that date I started to make progress with writing and to own my ways of understanding and making sense, and the bridges I subsequently visualised not only recalled "real" bridges,

but were rooted in the every day, and carrying traffic. One is described as: *"crossing a wild ocean estuary, ... signposted by seagulls, full of wind and wide open seascape"*; another seen in strong sunlight has strong buttresses and is *"part of everyday hustle and bustle. Business as usual."* These bridges had "come out" into the light of public day, reflecting the shift I had made in articulating and communicating my experience, both in writing and verbally. I was also finding ways of applying my understanding usefully in the world.

Using such visualisations was one way of monitoring my progress, like taking a snapshot. Analysing the picture in detail allowed me to understand my current position better and to explore the many-sidedness of the facilitator's or researcher's role, as in the following reflections.

Bridges have many characteristics and purposes. They offer passage over rivers, roads, railways and shipping lanes. They afford a vantage point from which a clearer view may be taken of the situation on all sides. They allow communication between people who are separated, having a footing on both sides of the divide, and sometimes in the nomansland in between. Thus they link incommensurable territories, and provide a short cut between them as an alternative to the long way round.

But bridges are a big investment, so they involve risk: one cannot be sure whether people will want to use them to cross over; or whether the people at either end will want to welcome the travellers from another paradigm. Some people may be using the bridge as avoidance. For them it may be better to plunge into the water and swim, or to take the long way round. Bridges also need to have firm foundations and to be well maintained, so the costs are ongoing.

Form and Style

What is a Watery Thesis?

It is interesting that water is only implicit in the title — all the bridges I visualised were over water; rivers often form natural boundaries between territories.

The thesis acquired the description "watery" early on during a discussion in the Bath Research Group. This was a shorthand for a number of attributes of my research: it referred in the first place to the starting point of addressing emotions which are associated with the element water, with the moon and with the feminine principle; next it described my approach to finding out and developing understanding which was intuitive, tentative, and similarly "yin"; thirdly it concerned my presentation of my knowing, or constructing of knowing in the Research Group, which, when it eventually happened, was nearly always preceded by tears.

These were a trickle at first as from a leaking dam, and the dam, constructed in part by the disciplines of an academic education, needed to burst before real progress could be made.

Many permissions were needed for being engaged on a watery thesis. Was it really OK to be drawing? Could visualisation and psychodrama really be research? Was the moon really important? Could I admit, let alone read, what I had written? Wouldn't "They" laugh or be shocked?

Having struggled with those questions and come to own my knowing, there remained the question of "how do you write a watery thesis?" What is the style and the form that can express wateriness, but still be an academic thesis? What indeed is a thesis? Is there some absolute, or is it a question of stretching the reader's tolerance of what might be included? Was I capable of finding such a form, of striking a balance? The solution I found was to go with the flow of what presented itself, and to let the thesis evolve.

It has therefore been an important part of my process to go with the flow of this research river. Let me explain what I mean by "going with the flow". This is not a question of drifting passively on the current, being tossed by every eddy, and being washed up or drowned. It is a matter of careful attention to the nature of the flow, both in surrounding forces, and within my own system of ebbing and flowing energy. It is an attempt to achieve some resonance and synchronicity between those two (inner and outer) flows, a harmony which converts energy into synergy rather than draining it through repeated collisions and mismatches. This activity requires cultivating active attention, constant alertness, and a sense of timing. When excellently done it looks effortless, as if the actor does nothing: like the surfer who takes off to ride the wave at the optimum moment; or the sailor who makes a fast passage by sailing *with* carefully studied tides and prevailing winds; or the expert group facilitator who appears to the unaware observer to do nothing. "Doing nothing" has no place either in facilitation, or in going with the flow.

Another aspect of wateriness is the effect of some other elements on water and vice versa: particularly relevant are earth which contains it, or becomes flooded; and fire which melts, boils, or dries it up, or is dowsed by it

Key Features of My Method

Journalling

My main method of exploration has been journalling. My original intention was that dialogues with other facilitators would be more developed and play a more prominent part than they did, with the journal as a way of recording process. This quickly changed however, and the journal became central. The dialogues, other than those with close friends, had no

momentum, probably because I did not know what I wanted and failed to energise them. The journals were a way of finding out what I wanted, and I have kept writing them ever since. My journaling method is described in Chapter 7.

The inclusion in this thesis of uncensored extracts from the journals gives voice to the unseen process behind the facilitator and researcher roles, and reveals the feelings, uncertainties, tentative connections and dawning understandings that are not evident in factual accounts.

Metaphor

Metaphor, as the dimension of language which 'transfers', or bridges, integrates, both at the level of brain function and inter-person relations, is clearly a much more fundamental activity than mere 'figure of speech'.

French p. 15

As will already be clear from the explorations of "bridging" and "wateriness", metaphor plays an important part in my writing, and is more than just a device. Metaphor literally means to "carry across", and has become a critical load-bearing bridge in the thesis. I have tried to speak, wherever appropriate, from my intuitive self, attempting to convey knowing that derives from primary physical sensations and imagery. I have used descriptive and metaphorical language in an attempt to convey meanings that are not readily articulated.

Particularly important metaphors are weaving, webs, and tapestry to describe networks of connection and emerging sense; trees, both root and branch, earth and digging, for the uncovering and coherence of developmental history; water for emotions; fire representing effective creative energy; the interplay of the elements of water, fire and earth as I attempt to achieve balance in both being sensitively attuned to surroundings (water), energetically communicating my understanding (fire), and remaining grounded (earth); and the bridge as a metaphor of communication and transcending the need for "either ... or" choices.

Metaphor has been a way of surfacing what Louis Smith (1994), quoting Edel (1979), calls "the figure under the carpet" of both my professional and research method "like a tapestry, which shows images on its front side and displays the underlying construction on the back".

Approach to the Literature

I have approached "the literature" in the same spirit of flow as the writing as a whole. Other people's ideas are woven in, and there is no separate review of relevant literature. The exceptions are those authors represented in the two reviews in Section 2. Since these

provide theoretical background frequently referred to, the weaving approach would have been too repetitious, and in Heron's case too clumsy, because his ideas are so complex.

This weaving approach developed for a number of reasons:

The first is a personal "anti-academic" reason which seeks to avoid and compensate for a long habit of regurgitating other people's ideas without necessarily understanding them, which my formal education usually encouraged.

The second reason concerns the process of the research. Just as I have gone with the flow to find my own voice, I have trusted the flow to bring me other voices to engage with. Of course I have sought out other sources, but rather by word of mouth, and by following a chain of references that seemed interesting, rather than undertaking a literature search.

Serendipity (Smith 1994) was often evident in the way that the right book appeared at the right time, either "jumping of the shelf" or being presented to me by a friend or colleague. Intuitively this seemed the appropriate *watery* way to address this issue.

The third reason is closely linked with the second. The knowing represented in this thesis is a pattern consisting of a number of intuitively developed threads which are interwoven into a whole of constructed knowing (Belenky et al. 1986). I have chosen threads that, although different in colour and texture, blend together, rather than making an arbitrary selection. This process has given me as many threads to weave with as I can manage. There are the threads of body knowing, intuitive knowing, imagination and dreams, personal history and psychological development, spiritual understanding, and practical application. My loom could not integrate more than these.

Signposting

Because this thesis is not traditional in its content, its form, nor in my approach to other people's ideas, you, the reader, may find it disorienting, as familiar landmarks are missing and the journey is as varied as the course of a river on its way from its source to the sea. In the beginning it bubbles up from underground and seeps almost unrecognised through marshy grass until it becomes a small but noticeable stream, spurting downhill erratically, changing direction and diverted easily by small obstacles, then gathering momentum and finding its own course. In the early stages it plunges suddenly into dark caves, through woods, down hillsides; and even when the terrain levels out, the landscape is still varied, and each change of country and weather is part of the life of the river. When it reaches the sea there is turbulence, before it flows into the integrating whole of the ocean.

Summary of Chapters

So I have gone with the flow, learning to notice the state of the water (soggy marsh, frozen, overflowing, etc.), and to accept the landscapes as facets of myself as a facilitator that needed exploring. I will outline these landscapes in terms of the chapters that follow.

Section 2 Why? includes Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3 examines my reasons for doing research in terms of making a difference in the world, considers the question “what is thinking?”, and introduces the theme of spiritual development.

Chapter 4 pursues the theme of spiritual development as another dimension of “why research?” uncovering the need to take myself seriously as part of the answer to that question.

Section 3 How? includes Chapters 5 to 8.

Chapters 5, 7, and 8 address epistemology, methodology, and validity respectively.

Chapter 6 extends the notion of epistemology to a female way of knowing through body knowledge, and explores the need to break taboos to honour that knowledge.

Section 4 What? includes Chapters 9 to 15.

Chapter 9 marks the beginning of content proper in the “What?” section, and is an account of my early experience of facilitating groups, drawing parallels between establishing my original identity as a child, and establishing my later identity as a facilitator.

Chapter 10 considers the nature and function of transitions in my work and is a series of transitional snapshots.

Chapter 11 explores my relationship with men, both in organizations and with my father, demonstrates how this has affected my work, and considers the emergence of my own “maleness” as a fiery quality necessary for balancing the wateriness of emotions.

Chapter 12 charts my personal progress and methods in becoming more aware of feelings and more emotionally competent. I work at both an intra- and inter-personal level, drawing on my own experience and the models of John Heron, Denis Postle, and William Torbert.

Chapter 13 explores the ingredients of personal presence, both in my own practice and for people in organizations who need to develop it. I consider how to maintain that presence, and how that is affected by working with a co-facilitator.

Chapter 14 describes my belated exploration of feminist writing and explores the complexity of patriarchal oppression. I weave my own personal and professional experience into the themes of the literature, then comment on my developing thinking, and consider how women can find their voice, and how women and men can communicate well.

Chapter 15 continues with the theme of voice, and explores why the conditioning to “sit still and keep quiet” can not only cause relatively trivial problems in public speaking, but actually inhibits a need to keep moving and making sound which may be fundamental to our health and energy. It explores how sound, and the movement of dancing and spinning can be healing and energising.

Section 5 Conclusion consists of Chapter 16 followed by the bibliography.

Chapter 16 attempts to understand the research experience, both at the micro level summarized into six personal “learnings” or messages; and at the macro level or the wider context of making a difference in the world.

Two sections in a different typeface in Section 2 are literature reviews. The first summarizes some of the literature about the ancient goddess religion in former civilisations providing the theoretical background to the spiritual theme of the thesis. The second is a summary and analysis of John Heron’s theory of Feeling and Personhood. If I had been looking for a formal structure on which to base my practice, this would have been it. My early practice was developed from the principles of co-counselling (see Chapter 12) as presented by Heron and his recent work shares the same fundamental humanistic philosophy.

Text Formats

A number of different voices are woven into the story and are represented in the text in the following ways:

This paragraph shows how the “normal”, first person, story-telling voice of the adult researcher appears. This makes up the bulk of the text, and within that you will find the following variations:

Journal entries use the same typeface, but slightly smaller and italic. They are clearly identified by being indented and having a box border.

The reference appears outside the box

Quotations, either from other authors, or from tape-recorded dialogues are similar, but without the box.

They are referenced in the same way

Chapter summaries, appearing after the chapter title, use a slightly smaller typeface than normal text, and are double boxed.

There are a few flashbacks to childhood which use this typeface, and are indented and boxed.

The separate literature reviews use the same typeface, slightly larger, like this.

Having mapped the territory, I admit to having had frequent intellectual doubts about the relevance of some explorations, which were shared by my research colleagues and supervisors. But gradually I came to trust my “bottom tummy” intuition to find the way and to rendezvous with the intellect further down the road. My challenge to myself is to demonstrate, not only that my route has been relevant, right and necessary to me, but also that it has relevance for others, and far from endangering our health, that it is vital to our mental, physical, and organizational health that such routes be more generally acceptable, allowable and understood.

Section 2

Why?

Chapter 3

Why Research? — making a difference

This chapter examines my reasons for doing research in terms of making a difference in the world; learning about thinking; and meeting the challenge of communicating the relevance of my personal, intuitive process to the public facilitation role. Alongside these practical and intellectual concerns, the theme of spiritual development also appears for the first time as a tentative voice.

The question "why am I doing this research?" seems destined to remain in the present continuous tense at least for my lifetime. And it seems likely that the answer will continue to evolve as I myself grow and develop as a facilitator and a human being. In fact, if the answer were to stay the same over a long period, I would consider that as an indicator that I had stopped growing, not that I had reached a definitive answer to the question. Similarly, I notice that I do not expect to stop asking the question or to stop searching when I submit this thesis.

Writings November-December 1991

The first time I was asked why I wanted to do research by members of the faculty at Bath when I applied to register there, I noticed that my early superficial answers quickly gave way to progressively more deeply rooted reasons. When the latest of those held, unchanged, for a significant period I thought I had come to the end of that particular line of questioning. And if anyone had suggested then that, at least in part, I was doing the research to resolve the trauma around my conception (see Chapter 11), I would have felt puzzled and embarrassed.

I would have been puzzled because I could not have seen how to arrive at such a reason from where I was then; puzzled because I did not then know that I had such a thing as a conception trauma, or that I could work with it; puzzled because I could not have related such material to an academic thesis.

And I would have felt embarrassed, for myself, to be dealing in such intimacies; for my parents at the implicit invasion of their privacy; for the speaker who seemed unaware of the proprieties in academic research; and embarrassed again for myself at the thought of such public washing of such intimate linen.

In this chapter I document three phases of engagement with the research which shift from the drivens and givens, oughts and shoulds, of the early years; through the apologetic, self-doubting fear of self-indulgence of the middle phase; to the more recent confident belief in, and assertion of, the purpose and value of what I am doing. Exploring these reasons has involved some complex weaving together of writings on the *why* theme. These writings consist of reflections on journal entries, which, interestingly, have addressed the *why* theme every year since I started researching.

Whatever the actual reasons for embarking on the research, the motivation has been strong enough to win through a good deal of resistance. Most of this resistance has come from within myself, but there has also been, and continues to be, a conflict between the demands of working on the research, and running my own business.

However, part of me engaged immediately with the research idea as soon as it was suggested to me, in spite of that other highly resistant part. A journal entry for June of 1987 describes the conflict:

Registering for Research at Bath

Feel very surreptitious writing this— in case I get caught having thoughts or being interested. ...

The resistance is about not wanting to be swept along on someone else's enthusiasm. About having sworn good-bye to all things academic after my (professional) training. ...

Cons

I notice I start with the cons, in the determination? hope? belief? that they will be more important.

Another Commitment

When I already have enough and often too much, ...

What's Stopping Me?

Things Academic

I swore I'd never get involved that way again ... It all struck me as unrelated to the real world, ...

And I can answer that by saying that I know that Bath is about exactly and precisely the opposite of that. ... not measuring but experiencing. But it's difficult to quite trust to that after such a long history of experiencing the opposite sort of education ...— I did really well academically and it was no measure of real knowledge. ... I got all the right bits of paper, ... and it wasn't until years later that I realized ... how little I knew and how difficult I found it to think.

Scared

I might discover I can't do it. ...

Other People

... what will they say ... about researching — on distress! — field day to be had at my expense!

...

Pros

I'm Interested

I can't stop thinking about it ... It really is in spite of myself – because it feels like something that has been simmering inside for years, and is all ready to bubble up.

Credibility

Because I don't have "proper paper qualifications" for what I'm doing. Would it help me to believe in me? or would it convince those who need such things?

Usefulness

It's a new idea to me that research is about finding out how to do things. That could be tremendous. Having help and support could mean I really could progress my own skills.

I realize this is the most important one. It would have to be useful.

Ripples

I'd like to add to the volume of humanistic stuff around. Add credibility to that way of working – ... be another drop in the ocean.

Balancing all that out

It seems really important to find out how big the commitment will be – in terms of time, writing, money.

Also, will it be useful?

Journal June 1987

The journal entry appears to have been a way of externalising a decision that had already been made because there was something in me that found the question irresistible.

Consequently I applied to register at Bath, and, just over a year later, revisit the Why question on the eighth day of the eighth month of the year nineteen hundred and eighty eight (8-8-88). My lucky number is eight, and the row of eights looked full of promise, so it felt auspicious. Those answers, which I include here, are still valid.

From the time I started school and discovered that the world was full of people my age called children, who were mysterious and hostile, I have been in the position of being on the outside looking in.

My research highlights that dilemma ... I am re-searching, looking again for a way to deal with that pain.

When I was first asked for my personal reasons for entering into research, for being interested in the subject, I answered at a very superficial level, that when I was aware of distress in a group I found it hard to stay clear and to continue to function as leader of the group.

As time and thoughtfulness progressed I was aware of spiralling inward to ever deeper levels of reality as I discovered answers to this question.

The outside-looking-in answer is the most fundamental, and fascinating, for the parallels to be drawn with research method. If I remain on the outside looking in as a researcher, then I have not only failed in my personal quest, but also as a naturalistic researcher.

So how do I, progressively, answer that question: "why are you doing this research?" Stepwise the answers are as follows:

- *to improve the experience of people who learn in groups*
- *to improve my own performance as a group leader*
- *to find a way of coping with my own disabling distress triggered by the distress of others*
- *to find a solution to the men-in-dark-suits syndrome*
- *to find the courage, and an appropriate way, to present and promote traditionally feminine values in a predominantly masculine culture*
- *to find an adult solution to the childhood and ongoing battle with my father and other positivists*
- *to resolve the conflict, represented by my two parents, between intuition and logic; spirit and facts; magic and logic; experience and fact in which I felt dragged back and forth all my childhood.*
- *to find a cure for my disabling guilt at not being able to "make it all right" for everyone, including my parents, all the time, or at all.*

Having spiralled in and reached the core of me by one route, this questioning and the search for solutions starts to spread up and outward again, using all the other paths of involvement that exist in my life, so that I have to call a halt. It is true that everything feels relevant and that everything will have useful light to shed on the subject, but this diversity does not help at the stage of trying to define and find an initial structure. Too easily it seems that I am researching everything, everybody, every activity, life, being and the universe; and it is too easy a step from there to say: all? or nothing? and suddenly it feels like nothing, or so what?

Journal 8th August 1988

Fifteen months later in November 1989, sitting watching the same sea, in the same bay, in a room a little further round the cove, I found these reflections encouraging, partly because the purpose I set myself was clearly a true one in that those really were the problems I had been

grappling with; partly because the process was working, and I was finding solutions, and directions for the future.

These directions are closely interwoven, and difficult to separate, but I will single out the key areas of focus.

Usefulness and Making a Difference

In 1989 I was beginning to develop a theme seeded in my pre-registration reflections as "ripples" and "usefulness", and which had been growing slowly and steadily since then. It really took root at the Grimstone research conference in the Spring as *the merest wisp of an idea* applying equally to business and research goals. This wisp of an idea was that I wanted to change the world, or save the planet. The idea sounds substantial enough but wispy confidence judges it *too grandiose for everyday use*. Rephrasing it allows me to gain confidence, moving from being an apologetic, to a purposeful drop in the ocean:

I settle for "I want to make a difference", a difference which started out as ripples in a very small pond, but which now has a vision of where those ripples can go, and wants to direct them and give them all the energy I can.

Journal November 1989

Continuing the "usefulness" theme, the image of roots and branches first appears in 1989, making the first important link between personal process and action in the world. This is further explored in discussing methodology in Chapter 7. It is significant that this first demonstration of the relevance of personal history to professional practice appears as a metaphor:

And amazingly, that vision and that sense of direction have come from digging around in my roots, from getting a clear understanding of their knotted and twisted shapes, and finding that, however misshapen and ugly they are, they still can produce strong branches, beautiful flowers, and nourishing fruit.

On the practical, tangible, everyday level of facilitating a group, I am asking "for what reason?" do I research, and answering with a glance to past difficulties, "because I lose confidence if I am challenged", or "because I find women with long nails/men in suits threatening".

On the same practical level, I am asking: "to what end?" do I do it. "What are the outcomes?" And the reply comes: "With the result that I am becoming more confident, and am able to give students a better learning experience"

On the other, inner dimension I ask "What is your purpose in this?", to which I reply "I do this in order to resolve the past"; and again: "Is this enough? Do you have another purpose?" And

the reply comes: "I do this in order to transcend the past, to realise a vision, to grow a new future — to make a difference"

Journal November 1989

This "other, inner dimension" flags the emergence of a key theme which was almost certainly a driving force at an unconscious level in 1987, but which was scarcely acknowledged on the surface. In 1989 I am moving towards it:

And why do I need another dimension? ... Could I not be well satisfied with becoming an effective facilitator, which is in itself beyond the wildest dreams of my same self six years ago? ... But that is too easy, too comfortable. I want that comfort, but I also despise it, must always set another challenge, another source of the anxiety I'm always trying to defeat. ... It is one of the deepest of my roots which tells me why I have that drive, and it is no coincidence that the deepest root connects to the furthest-reaching branch.

Journal November 1989

In 1991 the same "usefulness" theme appears as part of a cycle of action and reflection which seeks to develop a link between the inner and personal and the outer world of action:

I can now accept the appropriateness of including such personal material in the thesis to the point that there would be no thesis without it, there being no meaningful distinction between that material which is personal and that which is not. Or rather there is no material which is not personal. What has, however, caused me a problem is how to relate that material to the world outside so that it has some universal resonance and usefulness. I am not seeking generalisations, or rules, or truths, but I do want to demonstrate the relevance of my inner experience to the world of action. I acknowledge that this desire is partly driven by a neurotic need to avoid being accused of self-indulgent navel watching and merely writing a fanciful account of one woman's self-therapy. But it also arises from a need to achieve a balance between contemplation and action. There is for me no point in spending a lot of time working on myself, if I do not also spend time using the energy and insight thus gained to be more effective in my life. Introspection in the dark and mysterious places of my being needs to be balanced by moving out into the sunlight and making a difference in the world.

Writings November-December 1991

This commitment to bridging between two worlds itself makes the task of operating effectively in each more difficult, because it sets up a conflict. I need to "be" differently in each world: in one world spending time alone in activities which few business people would comprehend, in order to explore and understand personal material; in the other world having my attention "out there", being alert and sensitive to others as well as centred, in order to

communicate well. My preferred inward and outward rhythm does not always synchronise with external schedules, or indeed with the inclinations of my more social, frightened, or lazy self.

It occurs to me to wonder why I need to spend so many pages justifying my decision to do this research, for so it feels. I think this is a fundamental piece of data. The justification is not just aimed at the potential outside critics who would find it strange; nor the inner critic which fears being self-indulgent; but at that part of myself which finds this particular research concerned with monitoring myself and examining feelings, abhorrent, sometimes to the point of physical nausea. That part of me has fought quite hard to make me give up, but has never succeeded in completely smothering the seeker in me. The battle has sometimes resulted in stasis, paralysis and depression, so that it begins to feel that continuing my research is not just a matter of personal pride, professional standards, or business practice, but a matter of survival.

Having written it, the struggle will be on to give it up for others to read. The thought is that if I had a stamp like the one I have to stamp bills "Paid" with the date, if I had such a stamp which said "Garbage", then I could stamp this at the top of the first page and give it up more easily. It would be just another way of hiding it, pretending that it isn't important, that I don't care, and so avoiding rejection and pain. Or rather, concealing the pain.

My habit is to conceal the pain, along with my creativity, and my whole inner, spiritual process. What I want is to reveal it, have it acknowledged, have it healed, understand it and use it. I want you to know how rich it is, this garbage. For in a sense the whole of the research is about garbage – emotional garbage. I want you to look at it with me and not be disgusted. It reminds me of myself as a child drawing pages and pages of kidneys, and holding them up to be admired. My mother wished I'd draw something more "appropriate", more pleasing, but I was obsessed with the kidneys, they pleased me immensely, and I was not to be deterred.

Writings November 1989

This passage marks the transition to the second motivating theme. It links with the 1987 pre-registration reference to being scared which is not developed. In 1993 I misread *scared* as *sacred* and laughed aloud because that is no coincidence: I have been running scared from the sacred ever since I was in my teens¹.

Taking Myself Seriously

The uncertain, apologetic tone in which I refer to the scared/sacred theme seems excusable in 1987 before registration, but by 1989 this emerges as a habit of self-deprecation that

¹Described at the end of the chapter currently called "Enchantment".

constantly reappears until, in 1992, it is strongly confronted and transforms into a challenge to take myself, and my quest for the sacred, seriously.

Fortunately for me the members of my Bath Research Group and other friends took me seriously in the new, spiritual aspect of the research journey when I was not prepared to do it for myself. I needed to hear serious arguments in favour of this journey to balance the weight of conditioning which said that what I was doing was presumptuous, self-indulgent, or fanciful nonsense.

What is Thinking?

Another quite distinct theme in the history of this thesis shares the “push-me, pull-you” flavour of the scared-sacred theme. This theme evolved from a reluctance to become involved in “things academic” (at registration) into an epistemological exploration of how to write a “watery” thesis (Chapter 5).

The very first source of resistance to doing any research was to the whole idea of becoming involved once again in the academic world, something I had resolved never to do once I finished my post-graduate professional qualification. In spite of knowing Peter Reason and hearing at good second hand through a close friend in the Bath Research Group, that Bath School of Management had a very different approach to post-graduate work, I was frightened that the difference would turn out to be an illusion, and that I would feel oppressed as I had by institutions in the past.

I overcame this resistance, but the epistemological issues are not articulated until 1990 on the occasion of my transfer from MPhil to PhD. In the process of transfer I question the value of my apparently excellent traditional education on the grounds that it failed to teach me to think. This in turn is the forerunner to the question “what is thinking?” or “how do I think?”. I add “learning to think” to the list of reasons for doing research, and later discover that I could do this all along but need to attend to, own, and describe the “how” of my thinking process. The following journal entry of July 1990 elaborates on the original reason stated in 1987.

What worries me about the reasons I have listed is that they are all in some way “ulterior”, and none of them is about wanting a PhD for its own sake. Which brings me to a reason which is still too overgrown to put in a list. I bring the adjective “overgrown” in from the garden where I have been cutting back the jungle, tearing away convulvulus to allow the plants underneath to breathe. I think I wanted a PhD right from the point of registration, but for a very different reason from any of the above, and I didn’t allow myself for the exact same reason. Let me clear some psychological undergrowth, starting from what stopped me.

I did well academically all through school and university in that I got good marks and all the right bits of paper, and only two things give the clue to the truth – that I never learnt how to think. The first clue is that I was rejected at two Oxford colleges where I had interviews. No useful memories or evidence survive from that experience beyond the fact that I link it with the second clue: that I was also turned down by Exeter for their professional social work course after a gruelling interview where they really put me through it, trying to get out of me why I wanted to do social work. I missed my train, they never did find out, and I cried half the way home. I was angry with them for years. I still don't think they handled it well, but I do respect them for detecting something that it took me years to tumble to. That was not so much that I couldn't think, but that I didn't dare, which comes to the same thing – no output. Or rather no output which wasn't first input. I could regurgitate knowledge and achieve 95% for History, but I had no understanding of evolving cultures, politics or social trends; and no courage to express my own feelings or convictions, or admit that I had any. All of which led me to finding it difficult to go for yet another piece of paper.

Transfer Paper 1st July 1990

Further evidence of this passive learning habit is my “skill” in taking coherent notes of lectures which I do not understand. I thought nothing of this until asked to *explain* the theme of a lecture and met incredulity when I could not do so. This fits the Received Knowledge perspective of the women who “do not evaluate the idea. ... collect facts, but do not develop opinions.” (Belenky et al. 1986) for whom “Receiving, retaining, and returning the words of authorities are seen as synonymous with learning” (Goldberger et al. 1987). Certainly that passivity went with an unthinking acceptance of what I was taught, and a lack of curiosity about ideas and how things worked, although my curiosity about people and how they work is compulsive.

Only in March 1992 did the question “how do I think?” become really meaningful to me. It had not occurred to me before then that the intuitive activities which were such an important part of my life were valid ways of knowing, and counted as thinking processes.

Lack of faith in my own knowing, together with the lack of commercial and academic “street cred” for that kind of knowing has led to a vicious spiral where I have lacked confidence to fully present and communicate intuitive knowing when I have it, so that I sabotage my own attempts at being heard. This in turn leads to the phenomenon of holding “conversations in the head”, becoming isolated, and feeling that my knowing is inadmissible.

Writings 24th May 1991

In the context of Howard Gardner's Seven Intelligences, I was limiting my definition of thought to logical and linguistic intelligences favoured by traditional education systems. I

remember a day in the Bath Research Group where I struggled to exercise my logical intelligence in a left-brained and analytical way to convey my shaky understanding of Barthes' model of metaphor, and my indignation at the group's relief when my paper returned to my more usual intuitive style.

On another occasion, again in the Bath Research Group, I made a firm connection with intuitive knowing:

The experience was a powerful example of thinking and understanding in an other than logical way. My knowing seemed to be firmly grounded in my physical body, but the channel between physical sensation and imagination or intuition seemed to be clear and open, so that each physical symptom triggered vivid visual images, the whole process giving me an altered perception of the world. I had doubts, as I have had on similar occasions in the past, as to whether I was actually thinking. I believe I was thinking metaphorically, in images, rather than in words and concepts.

Writings 24th May 1991

Accessing this intuitive way of knowing gave me a further problem, and another motivating theme which links this epistemological exploration with the earlier theme of usefulness.

Bridging

How was I to communicate such experiences to others? How could I demonstrate the relevance of my intuitive world to my work as a facilitator? Although I do not expect to refer to intuitive experiences or make such connections explicit in the normal course of facilitating a group, it is essential to my sense of personal and professional integrity and centredness that I can make the connections for myself, and have ways of communicating them to those who want to know.

I achieved what felt like a breakthrough in this area at the Hawkwood conference of September 1992 when I translated the root and branch metaphor described above, into working reality for a group I was working with. I was able to take a personal theme and trace it from my earliest pre-birth history, through childhood, and demonstrate its relevance to my behaviour as an adult facilitator in the classroom.

This goes together with taking myself seriously. I already established the need to do that, and the root motivation is clear – to compensate for all those in my earlier life who did not, and to heal the scars of that. But where in the branches does that particular thread from the roots lead? What is the “in-order-to reason”, which leads beyond the purely personal? What does that do for the world? I found an answer to this unexpectedly while using the tarot, and reading Vicki Noble's description of the goddess Kali, the transformer:

When she has done her work with us — transformed us as she will — then she begins to use us. ... we become transformers ourselves. Rather than always working on us, she can begin to work through us.

Noble & Tenney 1986 p.85

The bridging function is as relevant to the task of communicating this thesis as it is to the role of the training consultant. The exploration of bridging has therefore concentrated as much attention on the method of the research writing as on the content of facilitating groups. It has been important to me to find a structure and a style of writing which is congruent with the content it describes, and that in itself has been a transformative process.

I notice that there are two important themes which do not feature in this exploration of reasons for doing the research because I simply have not written about them in that context over the years.

One is the improvement of my skills as a facilitator, and it is absent because I take it for granted that I want this as an outcome. It is also implicit both in the theme of wanting to make a difference, and in the theme of taking myself seriously.

The other, the exploration and resolution of early childhood experiences, was never an intentional goal, but rather emerged as a route to understanding other issues, and a means to the end of becoming whole and connecting with energy.

Ultimately the reasons that drive me on and inspire me to each successive layer of understanding are not that different from those that motivated alchemists. It is a fascination with catching glimpses of that whole, of Bateson's "pattern that connects".

Alchemy sees the world as a great dance of symbols. A delicate web of correspondences in which nothing is finally separable from everything else. ... It has long known what the physicists "discovered" yesterday — that the observer and the observed are members of a single interactive field. ... What we do to it is done also to ourselves. We are implicate. We create only in our own image, like God, and therefore self-knowledge is of critical importance.

Clarke 1990 p165

While writing this I have been reading Clarissa Pinkola Estés' book about the wild woman archetype, and will conclude with a reference to the very particular alchemy of *La Loba*, the Wolf Woman. *La Loba* collects the bones of wolves until she has a complete skeleton. She then sings it into life, and the wolf transforms into a wild, free, woman.

The sole work of La Loba is the collecting of bones. She is known to collect and preserve especially that which is in danger of being lost to the world. ... But her speciality is said to be wolves.

... and when she has assembled an entire skeleton, when the last bone is in place and the beautiful white sculpture of the creature is laid out before her, she sits by the fire and thinks about what song she will sing.

Pinkola Estés 1992 p27

Clarissa Pinkola Estés describes *La Loba* as *an archivist of feminine intention*, an intention and purpose that I readily adopt as at least one thread of my research, and especially that thread which relates to the presentation and style of writing. In becoming such an archivist, I have the opportunity to collect and re-member the bones of my teenage experience, and to continue the half-conscious intention I started over thirty years ago.

Review 1

Wisdom and the Goddess

This is the first of two literature reviews, and provides necessary general background for the chapters that follow.

It seemed reasonable to write about wisdom in a thesis, but I certainly did not expect any goddesses. I have, however, felt an increasing need to honour this source of wisdom and female power, and this section seeks to extract the main messages of some key writers who have pointed me in this direction and provided an historical context for a spiritual exploration.

The first was Riane Eisler (1990), the second Vicki Noble (1991), and the most recent Asphodel Long (1992). I have selected these from many other writers who document a similar theme because their very different voices give the richness of contrasting perspectives to the same story. They all bring the same essential message: that the disconnection of women from their wisdom and power is disastrous for the world; that it was not always thus; and that reconnection is vital for the recovery of the planet. They look to the ancient goddess religions for an understanding of the deep connection of humans with Nature and the divine which can restore our lost balance.

Eisler bases her study of male-female power relationships, through history and into our future, on historical and archaeological evidence. Noble tells a much more personal story of her own shamanic awakening, with reference to many of the same archaeological findings and historical and mythical events. Long uses as her source the texts of several versions of the Bible, bringing a personal dimension to her research by scoping it within her Jewish cultural background.

Asphodel Long chooses to focus on the female figure of Wisdom, the Greek Sophia, and her purpose is to bring her out of obscurity and trace her re-emergence as an inspiration and role model for modern women. Long explores the relationship of the Goddess to Nature (of and in Nature, creating and created by Nature) and the participation by humans in the divine through the mysteries of her ceremonies. Here is a key to unlocking feminine power, in the release of "life-loving frenzy" which reflects the wildness of Nature and has a healing rather than destructive power.

Long's journey takes her to the Israel of the Hebrew bible, to ancient Greece, to the Egypt of Isis and Ma'at, to Anat and Asherah in the ancient Near East, recognising that Wisdom was one among many goddesses who were "*part of the consciousness of the peoples of the*

ancient world, who are in the background of the events compiled in the bible". She asks "Where are the goddesses?"

Both Long and Baring and Cashford (1993 p. 665-7) see the destruction of Tiamat, the dragon of creation representing the totality of the four elements (living on earth and in water, breathing air and fire), as a highly significant turning point. They see in the opposition of Tiamat and Marduk a shift away from wholeness toward combative opposition marked by *"the first occurrence of a mythic image [of Tiamat] ... drawn in absolutely negative terms"*. The defeat of the goddess symbolises the withdrawal of participation from nature, *"the ties with blood and soil, where humanity felt itself to be personally involved in the living rhythms of nature"*; whereas the victory of the sky god, Marduk, represents *"heroic consciousness banishing chaos to create and order the world"* of the new order.

The battle of Tiamat and Marduk becomes symbolic of a new dualism where Tiamat becomes the *"'Terrible Mother' who kills life"* and is labelled Evil while Marduk is called Good. This an "either-or" that I have never been able to accept as absolute truth rather than the relative and context-bound matter of judgement that Baring and Cashford (p. 668) suggest.

The sense of participation with the divine in the natural world was further damaged by the ban on images. All objects were believed to have the divine within them: they were of the Mother, of *mater*, or matter. Long sees this separation of matter from the divine directly resulting in the exploitation of such resources.

Long explores the paradox of Christianity, a religion founded on love which *"has been the guiding force for the subjugation of women and of all so-called inferior peoples."* Here she sees a culmination of the devaluing and destruction of the feminine that had gone before, a "hinge or turning point" when *"female Wisdom was lost to the male form of Jesus Christ"*, which had far-reaching consequences:

The results of the banishment of a female divine principle have extended from misogyny and oppression of women to domination and exploitation of nature and of the earth's resources.

Long 1992 p. 182

Long's main message is to redress a situation that has:

given men ... an undue appreciation of themselves as superior beings, set against women and the whole of Nature; it has also bred within women an agony of conflict between what they truly know about themselves and what society tells them to believe.

Long 1992 p. 179

She does not underestimate the difficulty of her task involving *"fundamental re-appraisal by both men and women of their most profound concepts of gender"*, and concludes that:

Nothing less than a total reversal of the exploitative attitudes to Nature and to women has any chance of re-setting the balance so that the world itself can continue to exist.

Long 1992 p. 193

Long notes that there are two streams of religious feminism: one seeks to reinterpret the bible and transform traditional forms to re-include women; the other discards traditional religions in favour of ancient pagan rituals. Vicki Noble represents for me that second stream, and offers ways of rediscovering ritual and reconnecting with the Mother, Earth, or "matter" in ways that are simple, direct, and healing, and have the potential to be both gentle and "frenzied". Her approach is a practical one, using a variety of methods to create a whole body-mind experience of psychic awareness and embodied knowing. My experience of Noble came first through her book, and then in person through joining in her groups with other women to explore goddess spirituality. The experience in her group was life-changing, and I resonate with Long's account of the pain and release expressed in such groups that I too have shared with many women. Noble is explored further in Chapter 4.

Riane Eisler, like Long and Noble, sees the need for transformation. Her work focuses on political and social relationships, bringing the news that the present pattern of patriarchy was not always in place: that there existed highly cultured, prosperous and peaceful societies where men did not hold oppressive power. Like Long who traces the disappearance of Wisdom, Eisler investigates the elusive evidence for these cultures.

Basing much of her study on the work of Marija Gimbutas and the discoveries of James Mellaart at the Neolithic sites of Catal Huyuk and Hacilar in what is now Turkey, Eisler documents the misinterpretation by scholars and archaeologists of art, artefacts and rituals. This led to a misleading picture of warlike hunters using female figurines as erotica, whereas these artefacts were later shown to point to a cult of Goddess worship in a society in which women played a central role in art and society. Eisler attributes this long neglect of evidence in part to the patriarchal paradigm of the researchers, in part to the fact that the Neolithic sites were not uncovered until after the second world war. Systems and methods of excavation also became more sophisticated at that time using multi-disciplinary teams and better technology. These new methods give new weight and credibility to what is a fundamental paradigm shift in our view of history: that for thousands of stable years the Goddess was worshipped and women were powerful in societies spreading from Stonehenge to Malta and Turkey.

The agrarian societies of the Neolithic period have much in common with Minoan Crete: egalitarian, matrilinear societies where there is no evidence of violence or warfare, no separation between the secular and the sacred, pervasive evidence of unity with Nature, and where power is associated with the responsibility of motherhood to nurture and give rather than to dominate.

The Kurgan and other nomadic tribes who invaded Old Europe and destroyed these societies had sharply contrasting ways of life and ideologies. In keeping with their worship of warrior hero gods, their societies were violent, hierarchical, patrilinear, and women had the status of possessions.

Eisler identifies this turning point in our history:

the shift toward more effective technologies of destruction. ... accompanied by a fundamental ideological shift. The power to dominate and destroy through the sharp blade gradually supplants the view of power as the capacity to support and nurture life.

Eisler 1990 p. 53

She bases her two models of society on these two contrasting cultures: the *dominator* model symbolised by the destructive Blade glorified by the Kurgan invaders; and the *partnership* model symbolised by the life-giving Chalice of goddess worship. The fundamental difference between the two is the way they structure the relationship between men and women. A dominator society is based on the ranking of one half of society over the other producing a *domination hierarchy*, whereas a partnership society uses the principle of linking resulting in an *actualization hierarchy*. Eisler uses *androcracy* to describe the former, and invents the term *gylany* for the latter.

Eisler examines other manifestations of partnership societies through history, noting the resilience and persistence of women's actualization power through all attempts to wipe it out. Like Long she sees gylanic values in early Christianity, and introduces the idea of Jesus leading a "gylanic counterrevolution". She points to the central role of Mary Magdalene after his death evidenced in the Gnostic gospels, and explores the relationship between men and women in the troubadour period in southern France.

In our own time Eisler sees, on the one hand, "a major regression to the woman-hating dogmas of both Christian and Islamic fundamentalism", and on the other hand progressive ideologies as "part of one mounting and continuing revolution against androcracy". She gives feminism a central role in this revolution, linking this with her argument so far:

only feminism makes the explicit systems connection between the male violence of rape and wife beating and the male violence of war.

Eisler 1990 p. 169

a connection which she promises to develop in a subsequent book, one of two which will explore in depth the possibility of transformation to a partnership *pragmatopia* of the future.

We are at a cross-roads. Will the pendulum swing back to suppress the gylanic feminist wave? Or does it have enough momentum, in the context of the threat to our planet and the survival of the species, to open the door to a new future? Eisler invokes the human capacity to change behaviour quickly in response to feedback, and states three prerequisites to success in this: to perceive the feedback, interpret it correctly, and to be able to change. I would add that we have to want to change. Eisler, like me, sees evidence all around that numbers of those who hold power fail on all counts. The androcratic mind either does not perceive the feedback or persistently misinterprets it; sees no possibility of change; and does not accept the urgency of the situation.

Eisler does not shrink from the possibility that gylany may not win through, and that we may annihilate ourselves instead. However, her own optimism does win through, and although, like Long, I do not think she has yet answered her own question "*how do we get from here to there?*" I nevertheless respect her optimism. It may not be a sufficient condition of success, but it is certainly a necessary one; and it may be that the answer to the question is "we will only know when we have done it".

Review 2

John Heron's Theory of Personhood

This is the second of two literature reviews and introduces a theory of personality which I use throughout the thesis as a theoretical reference point, and a counterpoint to my personal intuitive and experiential knowledge. John Heron's psychological theory connects back to the concerns of writers in the foregoing review, and forward to themes in the work of Morris Berman which resonate with John's ideas, and which are more fully explored in Chapter 9.

John's theory of personhood not only gives a different kind of credibility to my own process (theoretical rather than experiential), but has also helped me to explore my process and understand it more fully.

In "Feeling and Personhood", (1992) Heron presents a very comprehensive and thorough theory of the personality developing from the pre-verbal, spontaneous and innocent child, into the adult, and on to the fully realised human being. He demonstrates the restrictive hold of Western socialisation and education on the developing ego; indicates how the effects of this process can be reversed so that the ego becomes reconnected with source energy; describes the ego in all stages of being closed and open, disintegrated and integrated; and relates these stages to theories developed by other writers. Heron puts this in the context of four modes of the psyche which are the foundation of his theory.

John's model of development and learning first drew my attention when he presented it in a keynote address at the 1991 conference of the Society for Effective Affective Learning (SEAL). John took as a starting point his belief that the socialisation process and education system as we know it progressively limits rather than expands the individual's potential. He sees the origin of this in the Aristotelian view of the intellect as the supreme function of the human being which kept the domain of feeling under control. His account of how this function plays itself out within the psyche reads like a description of the largely unaware behaviour of many managers in organisations:

The central source of all this, I believe, is in the psychological domain: the intellect exploits and abuses its affective base by controlling, and not acknowledging its origin in, affect; by denigrating and misrepresenting the nature of affect; by inflating its separatist power by leaching the formidable energy of affect while denying the fact.

Heron 1992 p. 12

The consequences are far-reaching:

When this internal psychological abuse is acted out we get the exploitation of children by controlling parents; the exploitation of women by controlling men; the exploitation of students

by controlling staff;... the exploitation of subjects by controlling social science researchers; the exploitation of human attention by the controlling media; the exploitation of workers by controlling management; ... the exploitation of planetary resources by controlling multinational companies; and so on and so forth.

p. 12-13

John's alternative scheme consists of an up-hierarchy that works in the reverse direction:

It is a model of emergence and influence from the immanent, rather than emanation and dominion from the transcendent.

p. 11

Heron acknowledges a debt to Susanne Langer whose work appears to have been the inspiration for the metaphor of the up-hierarchy. Although diverging from Langer's commitment to explain mind in biological terms, he honours her starting point which sees mind "as an up-hierarchy rooted in feeling, with the higher levels of the hierarchy grounded in and emerging out of the lower" (Heron 1992 p. 109).

The Modes and Polarities

Heron's model includes four modes of the psyche: affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical; and three polarities acting within each mode. These polarities are individuation and participation, ground process and reorganization, and life and mind. Of these I attend only to the first as not only the most fundamental to John's scheme, but the most relevant to my process.

Before going on to describe how the up-hierarchy works, I will take some time to explore each mode in terms of the individuating and participating poles which are fundamental to the whole theory of personhood. John makes the following distinction between individuation and participation:

The former makes for experience of individual distinctness; the latter for experience of unitive interaction with a whole field of being.

Heron 1992 p. 15

Heron emphasizes that these poles are not mutually exclusive but "*interact along a continuum*", one being dominant at one end and the other at the other end.

The following table summarizes the functions characteristic of the individuating and participating poles in each of the four modes.

	Individuating	Participating
Practical	Action	Intention
Conceptual	Discrimination	Reflection
Imaginal	Imagery	Intuition
Affective	Emotion	Feeling

My interpretation of the relationship of the individuating to the participating pole is that the one relates to the other as the drop to the ocean, or the tree to the wood. The participatory dimension is the more fundamental and inclusive. As it manifests in feeling in the Affective mode it represents the ground of personhood: the most expansive pole in the most comprehensive mode at the bottom layer of the up-hierarchy. It resonates with the whole ground of our being, our physical connection with the natural world.

... the ground of the psyche is the affective mode in its most expansive form as feeling, which is the root and fundament of all the other modes and contains them in tacit or latent form.

Heron 1992 p. 102

In placing participatory feeling at the foundation of his psychology of the person, Heron's thinking resonates strongly with the historical perspective of the goddess wisdom writers.

One way of understanding the long historical process of the replacing of the myth of the goddess by the myth of the god is to view it as the gradual withdrawal of humanity's participation with nature.

Baring and Cashford 1993 p. 661

Affective Mode

Because this mode and this pole are so fundamental to the theory I will take some time to examine them before moving on to the other pole and modes.

Feeling in the participatory sense involves empathy with surroundings, flows across the boundary between self and experience in both directions, and offers insight into and understanding of our place in the whole scheme of things through a sense of connection with the universe or with other human beings. My own experience of participatory feeling has been at both a visceral and a spiritual level (an experience that worked on both levels is described in Chapter 5). Such experiences tend to leave me with a sense of awe and peace. Most often they involve a connection with the earth or some other aspect of nature: being washed over by the golden light of an autumn tree, or the timelessness of the ocean; with a

person I might sense the context of universal love in a moment of personal intimacy; or exchange a fleeting moment of humour and understanding with a stranger which puts me in touch with our common humanity. An example of this kind of participatory experience extended to a group (team building) context, involving what Heron refers to as “group communion” or “spiritual intercourse”, is described in Chapter 12.

The affective mode is the home of emotion as well as feeling:

This participatory feeling and individuating emotion is the hallmark of the affective mode.

Heron 1992 p. 23

The individuating pole of the Affective mode allows us to experience complementary individual emotions (joy, fear, anger, and so on) which may arise both out of empathy with participatory feeling and in response to individual needs being met or frustrated.

The statement ‘I feel your presence and it fills me with delight’ makes clear the distinction between feeling and emotion ...

Heron 1992 p. 119

Imaginal Mode

In the Imaginal mode the individuating pole is concerned with our use of image and metaphor in perception, dreams, and imagination which shape a person’s view of the world. At the participating end intuition consists of our whole perceptive and visionary capacity, involving metaphorical insight and the mind’s ability to comprehend the wholeness of patterns and connections.

Conceptual Mode

In the Conceptual mode the individuating pole gives us the ability to analyse, discriminate, and categorize using concepts dependent on the use of language. Reflection, at the more inclusive participating end, is concerned with relationships between ideas and categories and theories which provide a coherent context for them.

Practical Mode

In the Practical mode, at the individuating pole, are specific actions, meaning intentional behaviour, while the participating pole provides the intention behind the behaviour, the rationale for acting without which behaviour becomes arbitrary and fragmented.

The Poles

There seems to me to be a difference of direction between the individuating and the participating poles particularly apparent in the Affective and Imaginal modes. Emotions seem to arise *in me* and travel outward towards expression (whether or not they are actually expressed); whereas feeling seems to flow in from “outside” and draw out reciprocal feelings in me, as if there really were a resonance and reflection between the “out there” and the “in here”; the golden light of the tree really seems to flow into me and fill me with joy.

In the Imaginal mode Heron talks, as I too have done, of intuitive “grasp”. But on reflection a more accurate description of intuition at work is of patterns and insights floating into my ken, rather than being grasped, again showing a difference of direction. I appear to be groping my way here toward an understanding of how conscious participation (Baring and Cashford 1993 p. 676) (see Chapter 16) can begin to heal the fundamental split in our world view. Heron relates this to the subject-object split which is discussed in Chapter 9 in the context of Morris Berman’s work.

... if I say ‘I am aware of the sunlight’, I can hold on to the idea that my awareness is this side of the split, and the sunlight is out there on the other side of it. But if I say ‘I feel the sunlight’ I have made a transactional statement of being involved with the sunlight in a way that makes the subject-object split start to look illusory.

Heron 1992 p. 103

Heron notes the pervasive use of the verb “feel” to cover a range of meanings from sensation to thinking, and refers to it as:

the great subversive element in the dominant use of language to separate subjects from objects. ... It is as if every time we use it we give evidence that we do not believe at the bottom of our hearts what we hold to be the case at the linguistic top of our heads.

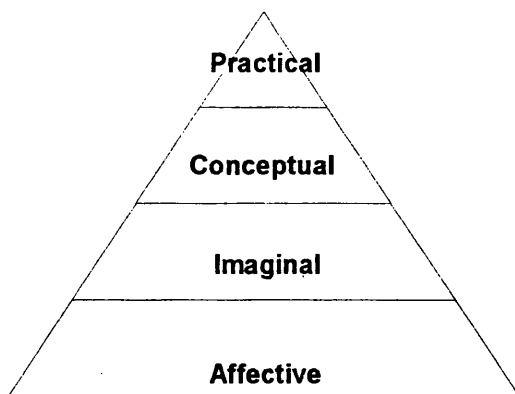
Heron 1992 p. 104

Again this resonates with Baring and Cashford:

Feeling has long been falsely opposed to thinking, as intuition has to reason — the former supposedly subjective and so unreliable, the latter objective ... In ancient Egypt the hieroglyph for thought was a heart, proclaiming as ancient truth the timeless poetic insight that, without the barriers of formal language, it is obvious that feelings think and thoughts feel when thinking and feeling are well conducted. When they disagree, this is a sign that something is wrong.

Baring and Cashford 1993 p. 678

The Up-hierarchy



John's up-hierarchy is a deliberate device demonstrating how the destructive and controlling trend of such all too familiar down-hierarchies can be reversed, and their effects healed, if we live with our whole being and uncover the infinity of our potential.

The up-hierarchy arranges the four modes of the psyche as described

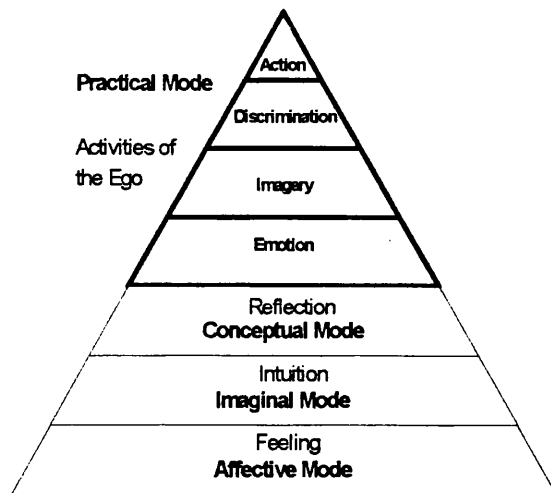
above, such that higher modes emerge out of, and are nourished by, the lower modes, like a tree that grows out of its roots and produces fruit.

Imagination [Imaginal] that is grounded in a developed life of feeling [Affective] is thereby enriched. Thinking [Conceptual] that crops out of wide-ranging imaginative vision [Imaginal] is empowered. Action [Practical] fed by wise discrimination [Conceptual] is fruitful

Heron 1992 p.21, brackets mine

During socialisation a person grows out of the over-participative and under-individuated state of pre-verbal childhood towards the under-participative and over-individuated adult ego. As a consequence of the contracting spiral of socialisation, options are reduced rather than expanded at each critical stage or turning point so that the developing ego becomes cut off from the participative modes.

This process becomes further exaggerated when we get locked into what Heron calls "body-bound practice" and "distracted busyness" (p. 81) which is all too common, especially in the business world. As the process of experience moves up the hierarchy and across the poles from feeling into action, activity becomes increasingly focused and bounded, contracting in scope as it moves away from the all-encompassing participative pole of the affective mode. At an extreme action becomes dissociated from the participative modes.



This produces an alienated ego, a *"restricted surrogate of the whole psyche ... precipitated within the practical mode"* that Heron describes as *"a local and reduced up-hierarchy founded on the emotional tone of the hour"*.

My own experience of living in this alienated way (see Chapter 9) feels like seeing myself through the wrong end of a telescope, or seeing myself in a glass

box. It is characterised by busy-ness and unawareness, where activities are always a means to an end rather than an end in themselves. I do not know how I am feeling, emotions may take me by surprise, and I either ignore, dismiss or simply do not receive messages from the participative modes. Behaviour may simply be unaware or directly manipulative.

Conversely I have noticed that it is possible to deepen experience by engaging imagination in the practical mode and becoming more participative. For example I note that my husband boils an egg in a different way from me. My method is practical and disconnected from the egg: I put it in boiling water and set an egg timer. He puts the egg into cold water and "tunes in" to the centre of the egg, uses no timer, and intuitively when the egg is ready. Both methods work but he has turned a routine activity into an act of participation.

Ego Development

Heron gives three reasons for the alienation of the ego. They are the subject-object split which comes with use of language and which Berman explores extensively; the repression and denial of the wounded child; and the anxiety arising from the tensions inherent in the human condition.

If we add to these the tensions of modern living: the stress of over-crowded living and travelling, and the way we live independently of night and day, of the elements, the seasons and geographical distance, it is small wonder that we find it easy to lose touch with the participative modes. In cities where it never gets dark, where pollution obscures the stars, where it is too noisy to hear birds sing or trees rustle, where it is too risky to go out alone in the parks, where rivers and air are dangerously dirty, where television and computer screens and advertising draw the attention, and food comes processed and shrink wrapped with no clue to its origin in animals and plants, how can we remake that connection?

Like Heron, Berman sees the Self-Other or Subject-Object split at the root of human alienation and of the troubles of our time. Citing the *Basic Fault* of Michael Balint, the work of Merleau-Ponty, and particularly of Jacques Lacan, he describes the Self-Other split as the *catastrophe of the gap*.

The consequence of this split, he [Lacan] says, is that the ontological structure of human life is paranoid... An ego is constructed to paper over this gap, making it (the gap), in repressed form, the dynamic force of our lives. In other words, we attempt to heal the basic fault by identifying with a visual image of ourselves. What most psychologists regard as a sign of health, viz., a strong ego structure, Lacan thus regards as the symptom of a disturbed psyche. ... For Lacan, the ego is rooted in what he calls the realm of the imaginary, the world of images, doubles, mirrors, ... It emerges as an either/or relationship, a construct founded on the opposition and identity between Self and Other, ... tricks us into believing that the Other is to be feared.

Berman 1990 p.41 square brackets mine

Lacan's strong ego is the equivalent of what Heron calls the closed ego. Heron, however, makes further distinctions between the *extreme* ego which is cut off and *distressed*, the *closed* ego which is simply cut off, and the *open* ego, *which is learning to create apertures between it and the deeper reaches of consciousness*. Heron sees a strong ego which can presumably be either closed or open, and which is robust, autonomous and competent, as a "*necessary cocoon*" between the naive state of the spontaneous child, and the state of integrated personhood.

A strong ego in this sense is not at all the same as a very alienated ... ego, ... Strong egos may have varying degrees of spontaneous and learned access to the participatory modes below them, prior to opening up full integration.

Heron 1992 p.84

Heron sees the possibility of progressing from the strong, open ego, which has access to the participatory modes, to the porous ego and dissolving ego states through more involvement with, and integration of, those modes. He describes a transitional *dissipative* ego state where disintegration into temporary chaos may occur before a person re-emerges with support into a more integrated state.

When I encountered co-counselling (see Chapter 12) I was closed off from myself (*closed* ego), and was having increasingly frequent episodes of *extreme* ego. Co-counselling dramatically opened me up to the Imaginal and Feeling modes, but breaking through the frozen surface of dammed up feeling was only the starting point. Having breached the dam,

the land had to be drained as a preliminary to learning to root my life, my facilitation, and my research in that rich soil.

Although often hidden, the degree of *porous ego*, (connection to the participative modes) I have maintained through my life, has no doubt made access to these modes easier, in what I now experience as a mostly *open ego* state. The whole test of living and professional practice is about learning to maintain that openness in face of the challenge of the new situations which could be perceived as a threat, *to refuse numbness and protection in favour of risk and immediacy* (Berman 1990).

Berman sees us being driven by the anxiety generated by the "basic fault" or Self-Other split, needing to bandage the wound caused by the recognition of ourselves as distinct from others, and re-inforced by the splitting of the world into subjects and objects inevitable in the use of language. An alternative strategy, indicated by both Berman and Heron's open ego, is to enter the fault and step through the "crack between the worlds" instead of trying to paper it over, and to find healing by returning to the ground of our being.

The Medium and the Message

Heron makes a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the complexities of ego development, a thoroughly worked psychological contribution to the jigsaw of participation which complements the historical and mythical perspective of the previous review. He also offers to the individual reader the experience of participation at a micro level through the exercises which are included at the end of each chapter and referenced at appropriate points in the text. In spite of this congruence with his own model in providing such exercises throughout, I find that, in other ways, Heron undermines his own message.

One problem for me is his choice of the up-hierarchy which I understand is deliberate in that it directly contrasts with the prevalent down-hierarchy, but, ironically, this seems, visually, to perpetuate the illusion that development is more linear, tidier, and more upwardly directed than either it is, or than I think John himself intends. He does indeed present his ideas in spiral form, but this is not the model he works with to present his fundamental principles. The spirit of hierarchy in its downward sense is further emphasised by the assertoric style of the book. Heron goes out of his way to justify this as a "*device of literary style and convenience*". He claims to *offer* a perspective while appearing to *be* dogmatic. This feels suspiciously like a license to be dogmatic complete with let-out clause. Reflection tells me to trust John's integrity but I cannot forget my first gut reaction, recorded by a note in the margin, that I have listened to too many men operating in this vein to feel comfortable.

Heron recognises that this may be oppressive to the reader, and gives convincing and full reasons for his choice. However, I am again jarred, this time by his implication that a *"secure claim to knowledge"* is preferable to a *working and lived* belief. He dismisses the warrants for his beliefs, grounded as they are in the immanent, that is, in what the whole book is about. It is as if he put knowledge on a pedestal, forgetting that he has just toppled all such pedestals. I continue to wonder which way up his world really is.

My other criticism is in similar vein — that the Conceptual mode dominates in John's writing style. I find the cerebral way in which he participates in the Feeling mode a contradiction in terms of his own model which again undermines the message. David Rooke in his review makes a similar point:

... I was continually conscious of the paradox of a text which emphasises the importance of feeling and connectedness through layer upon layer of analysis.

Rooke in Collaborative Inquiry No. 12 May 1994

The message, which I consider to be of prime importance and one which my own thesis is concerned with, that of the neglected other key of feeling, our *"resonance with being"* is in danger of being buried again in the style, but is worth digging for. Like Rooke I find the book exciting and revelatory, but I miss the *"expression of 'feeling' in an archetypal form"*.

Chapter 4

Re-enchantment — taking myself seriously

In this chapter I take up and develop the theme of spiritual development, first mentioned in Chapter 3. This theme is another dimension of "why research?" which was latent from the start, became an ever stronger voice, and finally emerged as having a central role.

I describe my growing awareness of a transpersonal dimension through symbolism appearing in dreams and altered states of consciousness, and trace the origins of my spiritual journey back to childhood.

The only hope, or so it seems to me, lies in a re-enchantment of the world

Berman 1984 p. 10

There are more magicians than we are prepared to believe in

Ed at Hawkwood conference September 1990

Since I am entering a new domain, it seems appropriate to say what I mean by spiritual and comment on words which may be ambiguous or unclear. John Heron distinguishes between psychic and spiritual capacity:

Psychic capacity addresses the subtle dimensions of this world and the subtle worlds in their own right ... Spiritual capacity addresses the divine as such. It involves a consummation of participatory feeling in unitive states of being.

Heron 1992 p. 61

I also use the words *transforming* as in transforming energy and *transpersonal* both in the sense of the *transfiguring* or *transforming* state of the open ego, and in the sense of *transparent* (Heron 1992 p. 62-3) to psychic and spiritual energies. I share Heron's meaning of transpersonal as "*a state which integrates the individuating modes with the participative modes, and is fully creative and expressive in the world*", rather than one which leaves personhood behind "*discarded like a dead skin*".

I accept these distinctions but cannot promise, at this tentative, exploratory stage, to be as clear in discriminating between my own experiences. My perception is that most of the experiences described in this chapter are psychic experiences, but that the overall purpose of this part of my inquiry is a spiritual one, and that such experiences may act as pointers and guides in such a quest.

I have questioned why I need to recount such experiences in this thesis especially as the spiritual theme is not prominent in my professional work, and does not really re-emerge in the writing until the penultimate chapter. My answer is that I needed to give these experiences

public voice and establish their existence outside of my head. I needed to declare their importance, and to describe the sense I have made of them. I believe they point the way to a direction I may take in the future.

Encountering Goddess Spirituality

I am avoiding writing about what is most central and urgent and exciting, partly because I can't name it yet, partly because it is too risky to name. So I will start indirectly — by pulling on the only available thread which is hanging from the ball of "research consciousness". If I pull gently so that the ball stays for the moment where it is, but so that the middle of the ball begins to unravel and be drawn into the light, stretched but still kinked, the end I am pulling turns out to be about my intense excitement on reading Vicki Noble's Shakti Woman

Writings February 1992

Riane Eisler describes Noble's book as *"a passionate call for women to reconnect with our goddess heritage and reclaim our ancient powers of healing before it is too late for ourselves and our Mother Earth."* It provided a missing link for me between my inner process of development and my outward purpose of making a difference in the world. The link is made on the spiritual dimension which is what makes it risky for me, but it is a new form of spirituality that draws me strongly. From the introductory pages the book seemed to be speaking of my intuitive knowledge of myself and my own power, knowledge which is gathered from an adolescent crisis, from conception and birthwork I have done, from the material of dreams, meditations and visualisations, from experiences of altered states of consciousness and from the evidence of my own body.

On the first page there is a message for the writing of my thesis, when the author rejects the elusive, watery element as a description of the Feminine. Instead she strongly identifies with the fiery element which she finds sufficient in itself, hence the book's sub-title "feeling our fire, healing our world". I have become impatient with the watery description of my thesis *on its own*, however turbulent that water may be, and also feel the need to fan and feed my fire. For, if the fire goes out, the water freezes and the earth with it. As my acupuncturist puts it:

Your fire energy is low, and when that happens, because your element is earth, you get all soggy like a marsh from the water. The earth needs the fire to keep it warm and fertile.

Journal March 1992

When my fire is alight, I am alive and responsive, keeping the emotional energy flowing and moving. However, water is an equally life-giving and transforming element.

The "Shakti" of Noble's title is the fire source. It translates as "cosmic energy", and is the tantric title of the Great Goddess, who is life itself, both a sexual partner and the innermost soul of man. Noble describes Shakti women as *"human females who are feeling the call of the Dark Goddess — the deep, serious, will-to-live arousing from within the body of the planet."* I can identify with this but have more difficulty with the word *shaman*.

Shaman is not defined by Noble but Kenneth Meadows (1991) describes a shaman as "one who knows ecstasy", a "transformer of energy", an agent of change from the physical to the spiritual, and "one who walks between two worlds". This resembles Heron's description (Heron 1992 pp. 53 & 63) of the charismatic person as *"mystic, spiritual scientist and creative agent"* which he roughly correlates to Wilber's causal level and Torbert's Ironist.

I am not a shaman, that is clear. Neither have I reached, nor am likely to reach, a state of charismatic personhood. Yet I can own parts of the role, and sense shamanic or transforming energy at work in the brewing of a group process: in the weaving of intuition and metaphor, love and logic and wit, anger and tears; in the transformational power of the emotions which surface; and in an altered state of consciousness shared by a whole group.

The experience of reading Vicki Noble's book and attending her workshop did not set me on a shamanic pathway, but it did open me to new possibilities; in particular to the potential of the goddess religion as a spiritual expression connected both to the earth and to the creative power of women with whom I have been able to learn about and share ritual.

This opening experience could also be described as a process of reconnecting with Heron's participating mode, a movement toward the open ego *"which is learning to create apertures between it and the deeper reaches of consciousness"* (Heron 1992 p.83); a move toward a self-transfiguring state: *"developing the buried capacity for feeling at one with the world and other worlds"* (p.61).

Although unaware at that time of Heron's theories of personhood, and that I might be learning to participate, I wrote in my journal of how "the wild has been coming in to get me" in the form of bees from the wisteria waking me, a small bird flying round the room, strange cats invading the house, and the wisteria infiltrating the bedroom. Some experiences (described below) seemed to give a glimpse of another dimension, or a message about my life, delivered by some sort of cosmic highlighting pen. A humorous example of this happened one morning when I woke to see a vibrant green question mark hovering before my eyes. It was a time when I was wrestling with decisions, and this "vision" felt portentous. Then, as I became more awake and my eyes focused, I recognized the question mark as a long curling tendril of wisteria which had been growing in the open window for some time and was reaching towards my bed.

On the one hand these manifestations draw attention to nature in a gentler but similar way to the natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes that serve to remind humans that we cannot control the elements even if modern technology gives us the illusion that we can. On the other hand they indicate to me that there is a whole system out there that my senses do not apprehend, an extra-sensory dimension.

My journal is scattered with similar clues to the existence of another world which it seems I am free to step into if I choose. It is as if I thought the world consisted of England, then started noticing pictures of exotic fruits, and thought they were an art form, fantasy pictures; then I noticed one or two people eating the fruits, or thought I did; then I dream of a land where they grow on trees, and I start receiving anonymous postcards of these fruits; and I read articles about their healing properties; but they are never named, and their origins are never mentioned, so I am never sure if it isn't some elaborate joke, including the advert in the travel agent's window. But the evidence becomes too pressing to ignore, and I buy a ticket to that place, destination unnamed. Then I seek out people who have been there. I'm believing it exists, but I still don't have a map. Or maybe I do, but I haven't learnt to read it, or even to recognize the cover.

Doris Lessing (1976) subtly and powerfully conveys this transition of belief, moving from the everyday description of a solid wall where the wallpaper pattern shows through the paint, to the gradual dissolution of the solid properties of this wall in the sunlight, until her character is regularly passing through into the rooms beyond the wall. The character speaks of her mental process:

... the consciousness of that other life, developing there so close to me, hidden from me, was a slow thing, coming precisely into the category of understanding we describe in the word realize, with its connotation of a gradual opening into comprehension. Such an opening, a growing, may be an affair of weeks, months, years. And of course one can "know" something and not "know" it. (One can also know something and then forget it!)

Lessing 1976 p. 10

As I leaf through my journals I have much evidence of the possibility of forgetting which Lessing refers to. Again and again I am surprised to find accounts of experiences which I would have thought unforgettable. My feeling is that it was *necessary* to forget them. They were too momentous to remember and remain the same person. Eventually enough messages accumulate that they cannot be ignored, or a particularly powerful, or critically timed message gets through in a way which permits no forgetting, is witnessed, shared, and becomes part of my acknowledged experience of the world. Each time this happens a whole new dimension of living opens up, a new room or suite of rooms behind a wall I hadn't realized was permeable.

In this chapter, I believe I am describing the process of the third major such "awakening" in my life. The first took place in my late teens and is described at the end of this chapter; the second happened just before I was forty and involved discovering and getting to know my emotions through co-counselling, see Chapter 12. The third transition has much in common with the first, to the point that it seems to have been "on its way" ever since then. It opens a spiritual door for which the emotional work of the first transition was a necessary prerequisite. I think it has taken so long partly because of my resistance, and partly because the shift required takes me out of everyday consciousness, which in turn increases my resistance.

I need to distinguish between psychic experiences which appear to be messages from, evidence of, or information about a transpersonal dimension which is the *source* of transforming power; and experiences which appear to be evidence of that power or energy at *work* in this dimension.

First I will describe some of the second sort of experience where I believe I see evidence of transforming-energy at work in the everyday dimension.

Transforming Energy

This usually takes place in a group, in a shifting of behaviour, relating, and communicating beyond the habitual and the superficial to a more open, honest level where love becomes possible in unexpected places. An experience may only involve one or two people in a group (but needs the energy and safety of the group to give birth to it). It may be fleeting, and it may be experienced at an interpersonal rather than a transpersonal level, as in a student's comment about a personal awareness course in April 1989: *"the different thing about the course is that people were not playing games"*. The sense of being in another dimension may be quite subtle, so that it's only noticeable when people start to leave and find themselves reluctant to do so. In April 1990 I refer in a journal entry to *soul space* on a personal awareness course, and describes comments being made *at a deep level* and an *aura which lasted and held people so that they couldn't immediately go*. In October 1990 the journal records *"several were expressing love on the last day". That word was used 2 or 3 times during the feedback round*. After a team building course of January 1992 (see Chapters 12 and 14), when the team returned to work, a member who had been absent commented: *"you all seem to be in love with each other"*, and we talked afterwards of being moved by *"people contacting real parts of themselves"*.

I think it is important to note that the starting point for these experiences was grounded in the personalities and problems of the people in the team. The focus was always on how people were communicating with one another, and what feelings needed expressing. There were no

transpersonal exercises or references to a spiritual dimension. The key was people's ability to be open and real with one another.

There was a synergy about that whole team building programme (which combined indoor and outdoor work, physical and emotional challenge, as well as informal social sharing, and conflict resolution) that seemed like a strategy for releasing love (Harrison 1987). Love sits on the regular plane of needs of the psyche along with Understanding and Freedom, but it has a special quality, its own built-in synergy that transcends the emotional plane. Maybe when all those human needs are met (see Chapter 12), and all excellently met, with all channels of communication open, empowerment working, love and trust in both directions, and the physical level integrating with all of these and transcending itself — maybe then they just spin you up into the next dimension.

The metaphors of spinning and spirals are explored further in the Chapter 15, but also appeared as some of the first "messages" of the next section.

Messages from the Transpersonal Dimension

A number of phenomena seemed to present themselves as "evidence" of that other dimension, drawing my attention to its transforming energy in dreams and experiences of altered states of consciousness.

I was not sure at the time what message they were sending, but they shared a compelling quality I could not dismiss, and, being coherent in themselves, seemed to give glimpses of a whole web of connections on a previously unknown dimension.

Spirals and vortices

The spiral is a symbol which has appeared in numerous dreams, and pictures I have drawn representing my research, and which seems to carry a message, as in this dream:

... looking out of an upstairs window into trees covered in autumn coloured leaves. Sycamore I think, all golds and browns and oranges. And then seeing vortices of energy spinning towards me out of the leaves. Quite insubstantial and transparent — invisible except from certain angles and perspective, appearing, disappearing, and re-appearing. Of the trees and leaves, of the air, and of light, and yet of nothing. Seemed like messengers, seemed important. The spiral is very busy on the edge, very still at the centre.

Journal 21st August 1990 (new moon)

Other "spiral" dreams, such as the Chinese dancer painted with snakes, coils of hair, and spiral staircases echo this theme. Another related phenomenon seems relevant here, which I

have called "nested dreaming". It is related because it gives me the sensation of trying to climb out of a vortex that is sucking me down, and which seems to regress into infinity. It is an example of the close juxtaposition of "normal" and altered states of consciousness, the movement between the two, and the confusion or uncertainty I have about that.

Interesting dream experience — of a process rather than a content nature. Nested dreaming. Thinking I wasn't dreaming and dreaming about that. So dreaming that I wasn't dreaming about something I was dreaming about. It went: I am not dreaming about this black woman — I am putting her in the picture. Admittedly the backdrop has a dreamlike quality — it is like a blind pulled down, a painted blind with a picture of trees and a meadow with flowers, but the picture comes alive, has depth, and three dimensions, and I can walk into it. Then being aware that I was dreaming after all. Then waking and recognizing that the whole thing was a dream.

The difficulty was in knowing just where I was keeping my awareness at each level?? Then I seemed to get into infinite regress of dreams so I couldn't wake up. Like endless reflections in facing mirrors.

Another variation of the phenomenon I've had at home of dreaming that I was getting up, and therefore not making the effort to wake up. Then finally waking up and being surprised to find myself still in bed.

Journal 22nd August 1990 (new moon)

This nested dreaming experience could be seen as another example of approach-avoidance as I resist waking and leaving the dream because of the recognition of the existence of two dimensions that this brings. Or I can see it as an attempt of the psyche to bridge the gap between those dimensions, to bring dreaming into "life", as it were, making the point that it is just as "real".

Singing and Transformation

A dream I recorded just before my birthday seemed to be showing me the creative and transformative potential of the watery element. It is still the most vivid and inspiring dream I remember having. I allow the metaphorical content to speak through the spelling.

Very vivid, ... remember walking in very different countryside. Very bright green meadow with a hillside rising gently on the left, woods on the right. Meadow sloping downhill. Halfway down I hear the most amazing sound emanating from the hillside on the left. When I look I see the ground is marshy and the sound is coming from the water — the most indescribably sweet music. ... meadow is so marshy at the bottom that it is almost a river with the grass long and bent over, and the water oozing up and running over the top of the flattened grass stalks with little bubbles. ... all the water flows into a sort of sunken tank, and there are massives of

creatures inside it and out. It takes a long time to figure out the distinction between them — inside the pool there are enormous and beautiful grey fish like huge trout, all smooth and silvery, and nosing up to the side in a great shoal. Outside are a mass of sleek, grey cats, almost otter-like ... And some of them are peering over the pool-side and almost nuzzling the fish, but there's no question of catching them. ...

Journal 7th April 1990

This dream was qualitatively different from most dreams I had ever had and seemed like a strong message from the spiritual dimension, particularly when I eventually noticed that it came immediately before my birthday. Although I felt great joy from this dream, and knew it was important, it is only recently that I have begun to uncover meanings in it. One message is that voice, singing, and music (which have long been areas to work on for me) might be the way to find creative expression and re-enchantment. In other dreams of a similar quality singing (described as "sublime" or "eerie, undulating like the wind") is associated with psychic seeing, unconditional love, transformation from old age to youth, and metamorphosis from sickness to health.

Another message comes from the harmony of the scene of the fish and cats who are not only co-existing, but almost metamorphosing into one another. The bubbling energy of the watery emotional element is having a transformative effect. And looking at the dream again in parallel with the team building course of January 1992 I see a similar transformative force at work. People allowed their emotions to surface, they worked hard to find creative rather than destructive ways of expressing them, and the result was a series of rich and honest communications which shifted the quality of relationships in the group. People who had long avoided each other, or skirmished regularly in the past, harbouring resentment and hostility, became friends. Love and trust took the place of pain and suspicion.

Gazing

Another group of experiences involve exchanging spiritual energy with another human being. This feels like a mutual, spiritual seduction, partly emotional, partly physical, partly spiritual. The meeting happens in the eyes, and feels like stepping off solid ground into deep, deep water which will close over my head. The excitement, the urge to step off, and the fear twist together in a sinewy skein of sensation which lunges up from my genitals, in waves of shivering heat up my body, prickles up my spine to the crown of my head, literally making my hair stand on end. Just meeting someone's gaze can do that — not with anyone at any time, but when that energy coincides and surfaces in two people, and is communicated without words or touch.

The words I use to describe it make it sound like a sexual attraction. It is not, but that does demonstrate how I experience the spiritual and the sexual as being closely intertwined which is a further source of discomfort: it might be interpreted as an invention of an middle-aged woman justifying her sexual fantasies; it might be an invention of an ageing woman justifying her sexual fantasies. It might be presumptuous; I might be mad; I might be burnt at the stake. Or it might be real and powerful and change my life. It feels like the furthest extreme from hiding, withdrawal, or being invisible. That is what is fearful. The risk of intimacy, of seeing and being seen as we really are, in that moment when all the barriers and defences melt away. The fear of being too vulnerable, or of not being there at all.

Gazing is a key way of contacting that energy, also identified by John Heron who distinguishes between the gaze and the eyes: *"the light of the gaze is the energy of consciousness,"* with the eyes being the vehicle of that energy. John describes his experience of an exercise with a man in a workshop:

As I journeyed backward along his gaze-light to its remote inward origins, I wheeled among galaxies and contemplated the genesis of stars.

... I emerged from the experience drenched with transcendence.

Heron 1987

My gaze experiences have been very different and I have sensed something powerful under the surface which grows the longer the gaze is held. The first is with a woman in a dream:

All I remember is sitting opposite a woman, a stranger, at a table in a restaurant. And looking up to find her gazing into my eyes in a strange and intense way. I don't know if I questioned her silently or verbally, but she became briefly confused and said she was looking at my ring — gazing into the stone. And we both knew that wasn't true, but that it came to the same thing. Which was going through into another world.

Journal 9th September 1990

Shortly after that dream I had a gaze experience of a rather different sort — with myself in a mirror,

... caught my eyes in the mirror after cleaning my teeth, and got kind of trapped and gazed for a long while, retreating and advancing. ... finding my sense of me as a face dissolving, finding myself beautiful and unreal, having a sense of falling and moving far beyond and noticing the fear in me ... and going beyond the fear, and then coming back to it and re-discovering the bathroom. And then afterwards remembering the dream

Journal 9th September 1990

A crystal meditation a few days later continues the theme, and seems to be drawing the threads of these experiences together:

I have felt in a transition place for several days... It is a time of year which is powerful. Just now I meditated with my quartz crystal... At first I felt an overwhelming prickly chill through my spine...then images of mirrors... Then came strong memories of a string of sexual connections, people's eyes ... like they were all powerful links in a chain pulling me into a place of connection which is at once deeply erotic and sensual and spiritual. It's like they are all bringing me the same message, trying to tell me something, a piece of learning. They all clear and give way to powerful images of a man, someone I loved, and suddenly through sadness a sense that our souls still meet when I dream, and that dream is rich and free from conflict ... of the real-life interactions we had ...

Journal 9th September 1990

And a later mirror-gazing experience:

Last night I was looking in the bathroom mirror to inspect the damage — so much crying exaggerating the wrinkles and bags around the eyes, and started to eye-gaze. Noticed the left eye was full of laughter, kept checking from one eye to the other. Left definitely laughing until it made me smile. The right eye serious all the time. As I looked into it my face started to dissolve and change with light flickering at the edges. Changes of colour to my hair and skin pigmentation. Hair looking tawny or gingery, face much older, wrinkled and either weather-beaten, or dark-skinned, or furry even. Could have been wrinkles or stripes. Bit lion-like around the nose. Notice my apprehension, and pulling back into the everyday. Sense of meeting a wise woman.

Journal 29th February 1992

When I think about that experience now, it seems quite possible, reassuring even, that I can go back and meet her again, that she will be there behind my mask. And that I can talk to her maybe. Last night I thought of doing that, and because I was emotionally pre-occupied, it felt impossible, it made me feel sick, not I think simply with fear of the encounter, but with the thought of attempting it when I did not feel emotionally centred and grounded in my everyday dimension.

Hearing the Message

My whole relationship with exploring this kind of energy, whether in life or in the writing is one of approach-avoidance. I am afraid of it. I am embarrassed by it. Being open at a transpersonal as well as a personal level opens up new possibilities for being vulnerable that make me shrink. It means being vulnerable in two directions at once, to the transpersonal

world and to the people around me. I have a sudden fleeting image of a windy corridor with doors open at either end, and shouting "close the doors before ..." — before what? before they bang? before everything blows away? before I get too frightened?

This feels like some extreme of vulnerability, a new challenge before I am comfortable with the first; more unmasking to do, more layers of reality or vulnerability to expose, always pushing out the boundaries of the comfort zone, resisting the temptation to hide, and to be invisible. It is a question of keeping the energy moving, not allowing it to stagnate; keeping the fire burning and the water flowing.

It is also a question of staying with my inner self, allowing space for that encounter, and for communication with the transpersonal dimension. But the "inner self" starts with the body, an understanding which was brought home to me in 1992 when I recorded a distressing few weeks of being stuck on all dimensions and unable to write.

My experience has been of extreme physical debility, the familiar dragging ache in my back, and bouts of overwhelming depression, all interspersed by occasional brief bursts of high energy. The discomfort might have seemed worthwhile if I had been meeting wise women in the mirror, or remembering dreams, but all activity on that dimension seemed to stop, or was as grey and foggy as the regular world. The only interesting comment made by several people was that I seemed "out of my body", "not present", or "glazed over", which was just how I felt to myself.

Journal March 1992

The acupuncturist balanced fire and water energy; I noticed from my journal that I nearly always had similar problems in March; I read of the overwhelming influence of menstruating at full moon, which I was doing; someone drew attention to the vernal equinox two days later which I know to be a powerful time; I looked at the progress of the moon in a desultory way. But none of this seemed of interest or significance. Nevertheless I worked at visualisation and diet and rest to heal myself, used yellow candles, and noted the serendipitous arrival in the post of a fiery yellow tulip to help that process. Still nothing. Impatience took over, and I began to convince myself that the whole area of spiritual inquiry was a wild goose chase, a fanciful piece of self-indulgence. In spite of these heavy hints to attend to body wisdom, I was still looking, or listening, in the wrong place.

Finally I listened to the tape recording of my session in the Bath Research Group at the end of February, heard other people honouring my experience, and encouraging me, and heard Judi asking when was I going to start taking myself seriously. At last I began to listen to the message from my back. It told me that the important focus was down there in my energy centre, in my "bottom tummy". What I began to understand from the "dialogue" with the hole in my back was that my experience of the previous few weeks represented a massive

unconscious resistance which went much deeper than I had realized. It was now surfacing and demanding to be faced. I could no longer push it under.

This approach-avoidance behaviour in my spiritual development has a long history. I am deeply suspicious of anything which smacks of religion, and find my own spiritual growth threatening, irrelevant, puzzling and funny by turns. "My spirituality is too earthy" I have said. It has felt illegitimate. Meditating to orgasm can't be right. I have compared my experience with the reports of others and found them lacking — or different. Instead of blues and purples and whites, I see browns, and blacks, reds and ochres. Instead of floating in light and air, I wallow in damp and smelly sensuality. And I have rarely dared to admit it except to my journal.

I am amazed to see how obstinate the "oughts" are around this question given how much I know of belief systems where my experience would be normal. My own relationships, as well as experiential workshops based on the teachings of the native American traditions, and readings about ancient cultures, all validate my experience, but still the inclination is to discount it, or to feel shame. I see clearly the origins of this guilt and devaluing in the Christian philosophy, and shudder at the power of that system to inhibit the movement towards openness and trust.

Even today it is hardly possible for anyone brought up in one of the western nations to comprehend the ancient world's opinion of sex as an experience of divine pleasure or a preview of heaven, without deliberate, laborious intellectual progress toward such an opinion.

Walker 1983

I see my own awareness of this conflict being born during an adolescent crisis at boarding school, when I was questioning my belief in God, reading about Sartre and existentialism, Goethe and pantheism, and finding it more likely that man created God in his own image than the other way round. (Feminist language consciousness would have been quite beyond my comprehension at that time, and in that place.) It occurs to me that this was the point at which I gave myself the message that I must do it alone, by myself. I am standing at a dormer window on the top floor, hiding from the bible reading group, looking out at the stars, and making some sort of pact with myself to go it alone without God.

The other image I have is of my teenage self lying face down on the playing fields, hidden from the windows by the slope of a bank, listening to the earth and sharing the perspective of an ant climbing through the blades of grass. I am seventeen or eighteen and struggling with an overwhelming confusion of doubts, fears, ideas and sensations. Chaos has erupted out of me even to the extent of bursting through the rules and conventions of that very rigid institution called a school which is supposed to contain me. I have been crying and falling

asleep in class; falling asleep in exams; I have rushed out of bible study group in tears; I have walked out of class when the thunder rain came, drawn by an irresistible urge to dance in the deluge; I have been writing poetry, talking to the moon, and listening to the earth as I am now, all in parallel with the things that must go on, like translating Cicero, reading Racine, sitting through pompous sermons, eating school mince, and stodge with custard, and playing lacrosse when I have to.

The eruptions label me as odd and have triggered punitive reactions in some, avoidance in others, and concern in one or two. I have the feeling that, if it goes any further, I will be treated to the same instant rejection and smug disapproval shown to the two girls who have recently been expelled for being found in bed together. Alongside the confusion about who I am, what I am here for and what is happening to me, there is a panic feeling that I must find a way of containing this madness, so that there will be no more eruptions to cause embarrassment, punishment, or isolation. I had stepped beyond the pale of behaviour that could be dismissed with any of the euphemisms used in the following passage from Clarissa Pinkola Estés.

Because it is considered such an untoward thing, we have learned to camouflage this ... soulful communication by naming it in very mundane terms. ... "talking to oneself," being "lost in thought," "staring off into space," or "daydreaming." This euphemistic language is inculcated by many segments of our culture, for unfortunately, we are taught from childhood onward to feel embarrassment if found communing with soul, and especially in pedestrian environments such as work or school.

Estés 1992 p.295

In retrospect, I see this as a massive crisis of identity, spirituality, and sexuality. No-one at the time, I least of all, recognized the violence of the internal storms, their importance, or the extent of the internal damage in containing them. None of the beliefs I held or wanted to explore were acceptable; none of the people I loved were admissible; none of the urges I wanted to follow were permissible, and just when I most needed help, I was at best ignored. I was ready to break out into sensuality and creative thinking. Last time that had happened, five years ago, I'd been uprooted and transplanted safely into this institution. This time nearly all the adults who couldn't help noticing it, quickly pretended they hadn't, and hoped it would pass.

Looking back at that eighteen year old me, I see the stirrings of an interconnected intellectual, physical, and spiritual energy. which now, thirty years on, I am honouring and exploring by resuming the journey that she started.

Section 3

How?

Ways of Knowing — an exploration of epistemology

In this chapter I describe an epistemology that makes sense of the world by exploring images, allowing emotions to speak, and listening to information from the body. It is a way of knowing expressed in metaphor and constantly turning its attention to the inchoate ground or backdrop of experience which is often obscured by the practical and articulate demands of the action at centre stage.

My experience of trying to establish the *how* of the research was one of confusion between Epistemology, Methodology, and Validity. At first I thought that this was a result of muddled thinking on my part and lack of clarity about whether I sought to show the validity of professional or research methods or of the understandings gained from research. I now see that the answer to those last wonderings is not “either ... or”, but “and ... and”, and that the issues of Methodology, Epistemology, and Validity are necessarily interdependent and have evolved organically and in a circular fashion as practice and research have developed. The only reason for separating them is that the medium of a thesis makes it impossible to describe and discuss them whilst maintaining their interconnectedness. This last statement is one which recurs throughout the thesis, and is an epistemological comment in itself, since it reflects a corresponding interconnectedness between meaning-making and practice and between the different strands of practice content.

The *systematic* search for an epistemology has only begun in the process of writing these *How* chapters. I certainly had some consciousness of an emerging epistemology at times throughout, but this was sporadic, I had difficulty recognising it as such, and had doubts, either about its validity, or about demonstrating its validity.

A central factor in this development process was that I resisted reading any other literature until I was well into the writing and my own ideas had begun to take shape. This contradicted the cultural and traditional academic message that, if you want to acquire knowledge, you find it in a book. I had nothing against books, but needed to suspend the intellectual activities of the conceptual mode in order to connect with my inner knowing, although I could not articulate this at the time. This was clearly a deliberate, if not fully conscious move away from the “received knowledge” (RK) perspective (Belenky et al 1986) of my earlier education experiences, and an embracing of the “subjective knowledge” (SK) perspective of listening to the inner voice where *“truth is defined as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited.”*

As this perspective unfolded a further reason emerged. Some of the understanding and sources I was uncovering, although “obvious” in SK terms, seemed so “unlikely” to my persisting RK self, particularly the material of dreams and visualisations, that I did not want to

risk the possibility that this data had arrived in my consciousness by a process of subliminal suggestion. This attitude co-existed uneasily with the fear that it was worthless and/or inadmissible. These stages later gave way to excitement when I did start reading and found resonances that were confirming of my experience, as well as more articulated and thorough expressions of imaginal and affective knowing that deepened and extended my understanding of my emergent inner knowing.

A further problem in both the making of meaning and the owning of an epistemology has been the fear of being presumptuous referred to in the previous chapter. This issue is clouded by my reluctance to be remotely dogmatic, to present finite "givens", or to be confrontational in argument. These problems may overlap, but they are also distinct. The fear of presumption appears to rest on the failure to find an acceptable form of words. Once I have acceptable words I can be passionate, if not dogmatic; but until then I cannot own or believe in my own meaning. For instance, in a research discussion, my friend Sara commented that I was *"bringing an ecological consciousness to the field of group facilitation"*. I thought that sounded far too grand to fit my role, and then later noticed that her expression had the same meaning as my own statement that *"everything is connected"*, which I was asserting with vehemence. Her expression not only used longer words, but emphasised my role, both of which triggered my presumption anxiety. I suspect that this is an experience common to many women who *"appear to have difficulties in assuming authority and valuing their own minds,"* (Goldberger et al 1987). My experience is that men are less often tentative, and tend to frame their ideas in higher profile language which reflects the visibility to which their gender is accustomed.

In 1991 I wrote of the various strategies I use

to make sense of experience; to create meaning out of confusion, or to let it surface; to develop awareness and understanding on different dimensions of intelligence; and to wrestle with ideas, understandings and systems put forward by others.

May 1991

But more fundamentally as I drove to Bath and to Cornwall during that month I was reflecting on thinking: *"do I think? When am I thinking? How do I think? How do I think about thinking?"* and the comment *'system of thinking' makes me go blank*".

There are two processes going on here. In one I am learning to recognise and honour my own idiosyncratic style of thinking as a valid way of knowing. This is a delicate emergent process in danger of being interrupted by the other process of literally "getting my head around" ideas which are structured in a more logical and traditional way. I faced doubts, and members of the Bath Research Group (see discussion near then end of this chapter)

challenged me about whether I needed to engage in the second process. I believed that necessary, for three reasons. The first reason involved an interest in personal integration and coherence. That is, it pleased me to weave into this current tapestry threads that I first picked up in very different past contexts. The second reason was a need for balance of the intuitive with the logical which is the more common currency of thinking. This may be due in part to lingering doubts about credibility, and a fear of being thought "fanciful" and not being accepted by the logical masculine tradition. I hope it is more concerned to avoid the trap of "either ... or" and develop an "and ... and" approach to looking at the world. I know that it is closely linked to the third reason which seeks to communicate and to be accessible to the widest range of people.

I later found these aspirations to be consistent with the Constructed Knowledge (CK) perspective described by Belenky et al.:

an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they had learned from others.

and

a way of weaving their passions and intellectual life into some recognizable whole

Belenky et al. 1986 pp. 134 & 141

The group of CK women, like me experience the rift, so common in our culture, between thinking and feeling described by Heron (Heron 1992), and are driven to bridge that gap (see Chapter 9). They too aim to find a voice, but have problems getting that voice heard (Belenky et al. 1986 p. 146-7).

I was therefore looking for an epistemology that embraced the very different processes of intellect and intuition. I did not seek an epistemology in the sense of a *theory of knowledge*, which seems too cut and dried for my purposes: a *theory* can mean a speculative idea or conjecture, but more often carries the expectation of having a system of rules and procedures; and *knowledge* is to me a more finite product than I have experienced. I prefer to describe my knowing as a developing understanding or a map of connections which come from a number of different sources, including the different methods I have used in the course of the research. It is significant that I prefer to describe this epistemology using gerunds which point to a continuing process, rather than nouns which indicate completeness. A similar need seems to be reflected in Belenky et al.'s use of *understanding* (1986) implying connection and acceptance, as opposed to *knowledge* implying separation and judgement.

What emerges from this process is a pattern of understanding that repeats itself across different methods of inquiry, and that results in finding not only an epistemology but a whole

way of being consistent with it. I used to say that I seemed to be skating over the surface of my life, and still have episodes of feeling that way. I realise now that the whole thrust of this thesis is towards finding a more rooted and grounded way of being. Both my experience and the work of Heron and others provide the grounded epistemology on which that way of being is based.

Image-Thinking — an intuitive epistemology

What is intuition? I will answer this question in terms of Heron's up-hierarchy. When I first encountered Heron's model I noticed that my own process did not follow a steady progression up through the modes (Affective, Imaginal, Conceptual, Practical), but gave scant attention to the conceptual mode, moving from the intuitive level directly into action. Only when I had cycled a few times omitting that stage, did I find it profitable to conceptualise what I had been doing. This reflection and analysis then led to noticing gaps and inconsistencies in my practice and making improvements in the practical area.

When I first noticed this I could not decide whether I or the model was "wrong", and came to the conclusion that my process is a valid alternative model ...

Journal March 1993

I began to write this chapter as much to prove to myself that I possessed valid ways of knowing, as to explore what they were. Lack of faith in my natural intuitive understanding, together with the lack of commercial and academic credibility for that kind of knowing led to a vicious spiral where I lacked confidence to present and communicate intuitive knowing when I had it, so sabotaging my own attempts at being heard. This in turn led to the phenomenon of holding "conversations in my head", becoming isolated, and feeling that my knowing was inadmissible, even to myself.

Although my intuitive understanding proved repeatedly that it was reliable, I nevertheless had to learn not to dismiss it, not to be apologetic, embarrassed, lazy, or afraid, but to fully honour it; to notice, value, and unrelentingly pursue meanings which emerged in this way. They contain rich layers of meaning, microcosms or holograms of their original context. They are elusive to grasp, but having grasped them initially, I can return to them again and again, finding other layers of meaning.

Having learned to value this way of knowing for private and personal use, I found it difficult to move on to sharing it with others, let alone going so far as to use it in my research and commercial work. It seemed inadmissible — both the content and the method felt so intimate that it seemed indecent. Also, I was hearing powerful voices from the past and the present which protested that such a perspective was totally inappropriate in an academic or

commercial setting. Going public felt like the classic nightmare of finding myself walking naked down the High Street. How could I reconcile accounts of that sort of experience with the image of a training consultant or the traditions of academic discipline? I told myself that this was new paradigm research, that personal content was not only acceptable but necessary, but the voices continued to mutter about fanciful self-indulgence. It took a powerful experience, described in a later section of this chapter, to break through my resistance.

I will now briefly outline what an intuitive epistemology looks like in terms of where the data comes from, the different sources of sensation and image which regularly provide information and clues to understanding. In subsequent sections I will describe some examples of using these and follow some of the themes which have become important to me.

Probably the richest source of images and metaphorical messages for me is **dreaming**. Dreams often draw attention to areas of my life I am neglecting, or give me encouragement in a particular direction. The messages are richly layered and often jolt me emotionally with surprise, delight, fear, anger, deep sadness, or humour. They can be mysterious and elusive, or vivid and punchy.

The results of recording my dreams have deeply astonished me, not least I think because, although I claimed to "believe in" dreams, not only did that claim cover a fundamental scepticism, but I also had no real idea what believing in dreams meant.

A journal entry three years after several years of recording dreams shows a change of attitude as I tentatively reflect on what the power of dreams might be.

By attending to my dreams I maybe enable some mysterious process of accessing those qualities I have in the dreams, and channelling the power of the dream life patterns to work magic in waking life.

Journal 28th May 1992

Commenting on the part of dreams in *The Chymical Wedding* Clarke quotes Yeats: "*In dreams begins responsibility*". "*How else can your best self speak?*" helping me to recognise the part dreams have to play in taking myself seriously. Re-reading *The Chymical Wedding* clarifies a dream message from 1989 of amphibious creatures who metamorphosed from fish into cats as they slid in and out a pool.

'We don't sleep to sleep, dammit, any more than we eat to eat. We sleep to dream. We're amphibians. We live in two elements and need both. ...'

By now I have substantial evidence of dreams being part of my story, and have even been able to demonstrate the relevance of dreams and fantasy work to my effectiveness as a facilitator, to an audience by no means predisposed to be receptive. This is described in the next chapter on Validity. This is only the beginning of my understanding of how to relate to my dreams, and I believe it marks the beginning of a new cycle of development.

Meditation produces similar sorts of images, but since the waking mind is involved (although in an altered state of consciousness), they tend to be more closely linked to everyday reality, may be bizarre, but have less mystery. The process of both types of meditation that I use brings me down into connection with the participative modes.

The terraces meditation, in which I travel through gardens related by colour to the chakra system, is part visualisation, and uses images connected to the body and to animals, plants and the elements. Colours (imaginal mode) represent the chakras (conceptual symbol for energy centres in the body), and link them to body function (affective). Using gardens as a device to bring the chakras to life makes links to the natural universe. An example of this is described in the next chapter.

In other "emptying" meditations using attention either to breath or to a mantra, I imagine the core of my body as a well into which I, as consciousness, climb and sink down into the ground of my being which feels like coming home, a melting, as of the wave being re-absorbed into the ocean. This is an immensely regenerative process on the rare occasions when I let go of my individual consciousness.

Another very similar source which also involves the waking mind is **visualisation**, which can either be a guided or a solitary activity and can provide insight into a chosen area of focus. I have found **drawing or painting** is also a powerful source of image-making, and have sometimes combined these last two effectively.

Using image-making in the classroom as a personal strategy for analysing facilitation problems (see later section, Using Metaphor) is a different kind of activity. The image usually springs spontaneously into my mind in response to an unusual or problematic behaviour or characteristic of a participant, although sometimes I will deliberately set out to search for it. One unanswerable question I have as a researcher is whether I have "spoiled" my own process in this area by becoming aware of it and analysing it. I believe that this kind of spoiling is usually only temporary, lasting during the period of intense analysis, and that the process then goes underground again, emerging more richly and strongly at a later date.

Structures and Shapes — the pattern that connects

Two sorts of structure have been important, both in uncovering and making sense of intuitive knowing. One sort of structure is inclusive and divergent, and consists of flowing into the patterns and shapes that emerge spontaneously, through, for instance, drawing; the other separates and converges by uses models as a temporary framework to focus and communicate intuitive material. An independent thread that does not fit under either of those headings is that of personal history which also provides structure and consistency as well as meaning for intuitive imaginal material. For example, an image appearing once has limited significance, but if it keeps appearing at different life stages it develops an inner coherence, a story and meaning of its own.

The two-path model of inquiry described by Reason and Hawkins in their exploration of storytelling (Reason 1988) is an example of the second sort of structure which also finds a place for emergent intuitive material. It has been a useful basic framework for exploring how I think, understand and come to make sense of experience. Discovering it (see Chapter 7) was a major step in learning to value my intuitive approach to knowing. They distinguish between:

- the path of explanation
- the path of expression

The path of Explanation sits in Heron's Conceptual mode, using analytical models and theories as a way of representing experience. Explanation involves selection, separation, and often reduction of the richness of experience to a simpler and more general form. This approach is useful in introducing a framework and a language that allow complex behaviour to be discussed in simple terms. A model does not mirror life, but it gives it a new, clear, and simple perspective that allows people to suddenly "see" their own predicament. When using such mediating representations, I frequently quote the saying "a model is a useful set of lies". The map is not the territory, but we need the map to find our way. If a model is used mechanistically, however, without connection to the territory or ground it feeds the fix-it mentality which is addictive in its need to find ad hoc solutions rather than underlying processes and needs.

The path of Expression lies in Heron's Imaginal mode in which meaning is demonstrated or presented rather than explained, and which deals in metaphor, images, and storytelling. It is holistic and experiential. Although it is rooted in the personal it too seeks to extend meaning beyond the personal, not by reducing it, but through links with the universal archetypes of fairytale and myth, a process described by Joseph Campbell:

Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream; both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche. But in the dream the forms are quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer, whereas in myth the problems and solutions shown are directly valid for mankind.

Campbell 1972 p19

In Bateson's terms Expression is the ecological path which produces knowledge or understanding that is ultimately empowering, just as thinking that *crops out of* imagination is empowered (Heron 1992). If Bateson answers a question with a story, that does not give an answer or a solution directly or directly. It gives a context of relevance from which a listener is free to draw their own learning.

When I attempted to classify the various strategies I use for sense making under the headings of Explanation and Expression, I found that they did not divide that cleanly. When I started from an intuitive place on the path of Expression, the results were often exuberant, and I needed to borrow a model from the path of Explanation to draw temporary order out of apparent chaos. Conversely my approach to an analytical model was often intuitive. Having started out to map my use of the two paths on an "either ..., or ..." basis, I was at first dismayed at the cat's cradle of cross connections, then recognised this as a valuable pattern in itself. *Either-or* proved inadequate and gave way to *and-and*. This admission of what seemed at first sight a mess, the weaving back and forth between the two paths, marked the first noticing of the web pattern as important.

Weaving, where the warp is my forward momentum along themes in my life, my questing, ... along a number of distinct paths; and the weft or woof is the method or medium through which I process, experience, and progress those themes. I think. The pattern is the meaning which emerges from the systematic coming together of themes and processing. The pattern is always there but it needs to be noticed, reflected, brought to the surface, made manifest, by the weaver. My ability to reveal or show the pattern to others is part of the pattern, demonstrates the pattern-ness. Co-creative pattern-making.

Journal 15th May 1992

Once again using Heron's terms, but adapting his model to my own experience, it is in this middle ground of criss-crossing paths between the paths of Expression and Explanation that I find the Practical Mode. For it is out of that synergy and movement between the two that useful strategies emerge for good practice. It is here that hunches are tested, sparse models are fleshed out, and gaps in intuitive practice are filled in the light of systematic appraisal.

I had been aware of what seemed like a web of synchronicities in my life before, but had not allowed it the credibility necessary to include it in making research sense. However, it included itself. Given the new paradigm methods of the Bath Research Group, and my own background in personal growth, it was natural for me to explore in some depth my personal reasons for doing the research. It became apparent that a pattern of interconnections ran throughout my past and present experience, whether in the research, personal relationships, or in my commercial training work. The pattern, that I notice in images from dreams, meditations, and visualisations, is reflected in my physical symptoms and energy. Sometimes it is obscure, or I am ignoring it; sometimes it is bright and exciting; at other times I am defeated by the sticky, all-pervading wholeness of this web, because it is impossible to isolate one piece in order to write about it, without destroying it.

...once again I am staggered by how everything hangs together so intricately and so persistently. Like the threads are so fine, yet they are so strong. It's like a web, and sometimes I wish to hell you could actually feel you've broken away and found something different, but I always come back to the same thing all the time, which I suppose is one way of discovering consistency and validity and all that. But sometimes it just feels blooming irritating.

Journal June 1991

To turn to a watery analogy, when the tide is up, I cannot grasp any piece of the sea: the seaweed, shells, and fish swirl around, eluding me, and the water runs away between my fingers. If I wait until the tide goes out, I can walk along the beach and pick up lumps of seaweed, shells, and pebbles, but they are dull, still, and colourless compared with how they were in the water. Similarly, if I take a bucket of water from the sea and stare into it, and touch it and smell it and taste it, I still know hardly anything about the sea. Nevertheless the sea can be so overwhelming and stormy, that there are times when I can only cope with it in bucketfuls, or from the safety of the cliff top. Buckets and total immersion have their value, as do the separate paths of Explanation and Expression. My view is that each can enhance and inform the other, but I will always rely more on expressive understanding, as reflected by the emphasis placed upon it in this thesis. John Steinbeck powerfully expresses the distinction between the experiential and the analytical approach to knowing in this passage:

For example: the Mexican sierra has "XVII-15-IX" spines in the dorsal fin. These can easily be counted. But if the sierra strikes hard on the line so that our hands are burned, if the fish sounds and nearly escapes and finally comes in over the rail, his colors pulsing and his tail beating the air, a whole new relational externality has come into being — an entity which is more than the sum of the fish plus the fisherman. The only way to count the spines of the sierra unaffected by this second relational reality is to sit in the laboratory, open an evil-smelling jar, remove a stiff, colorless fish from formalin solution, count the spines, and write the truth "D.XVII-

15-IX". *There you have recorded a reality which cannot be assailed — probably the least important reality concerning either the fish or yourself.*

Steinbeck 1960 p. 70

Tears Discussing — a watery thesis

The question that evolved in Research Group discussions "how do you write a watery thesis?" related partly to the nature of wateriness, partly to the problem of structuring and communicating it, see below. But my main concern in presenting wateriness was to convey what Steinbeck calls the "second relational reality" and which I would call the primary and fundamental reality. I did not want to present it as something *lacking* structure, form and boundaries, but as something *having* flow and energy.

"Watery" in this context is no thin, dilute, or insipid thing, but refers to the constantly shifting form of feeling material which is rich in elemental imagery and symbolism. Being watery is an attempt at participation in the ocean from which we came, an attempt at thinking with feelings in an unalienated way. Baring and Cashford note that the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph for thought was a heart:

... without the barriers of formal language, it is obvious that feelings think and thoughts feel when thinking and feeling are well conducted. When they disagree, this is a sign that something is wrong.

Baring and Cashford 1991 p. 678

I found it hard at first to allow the positive connotation of "progress at last" that my tears acquired in the Research Group, when Peter would say: "*Now you've started crying we'll get somewhere*". There was much truth in that and; in a sense, each outbreak of tears was an other breach in the dam put in place by the patriarchal conditioning. Sometimes they were tears of frustration; sometimes they came from a deeper place as if they participated in the pain of the earth and of women throughout the world and down the centuries; sometimes they felt releasing and healing.

Falling into the Gaps — the figure-ground shift

The question of how to present this intuitive knowing and thinking to the reader is connected to the issue, central to the research problem, of how people communicate across paradigms which have no overlaps. The question was given a shorthand in the research group of "*how do you write a watery thesis?*". In other words, how is it possible to bring the intellectual task of writing, especially in an academic context, to bear on affective content. Once again we encounter the divorce of thinking and feeling explored by Heron and experienced by the

women of the Goldberger study who found thinking and feeling *"split asunder"* (Goldberger et al 1987). In such a writing task it is not enough just to be watery in a culture that does not understand wateriness and refuses to get its feet wet. There needs to be a bridge, stepping stones; an explanation of the material and its form; a key to understanding it which will make the translation from one culture to the other. Metaphor is a key tool not only for creating meaning, but also in making that translation.

When I make a figure-ground shift, I fall out of one paradigm of seeing the world into another. It can happen at a micro level, as in the gaps between words; or at a macro level, as in feeling at one with nature, seeing the connectedness of everything which is usually constructed as separate. Falling into these gaps is another way of expressing how we access the participatory modes through apertures in the ego as a preliminary to full integration (Heron 1992).

In terms of Heron's model, the figure-ground shift is a flip of perspective from the individuating into the participatory dimension. Another way of viewing it is as a shift away from the alienated and disconnected busy ego in a sudden experience of re-connection to the grounded Feeling and Imaginal modes. It is seeing what I usually view as the background of my life, not as a mere backdrop but as the Ground, having more importance than what is being acted out in front of it.

James Hillman, in his attempt at a psychology of soul, expresses this in yet another way. He refers to the lost, middle position of soul (imaginal mode), between body (affective mode) and spirit (abstract-conceptual mode), and describes soul as making meaning possible, deepening events into experiences, and allowing us to experience the symbolic and the metaphorical through dreams and imagination:

the world of imagination, passion, fantasy, reflection, that is neither physical and material on the one hand, nor spiritual and abstract on the other, yet bound to them both.

Hillman 1977

This was a transitional place which I could clearly relate to, a place for bridging which used metaphor as a means of communication, and where meaning-making takes place which is relevant to both worlds. Hillman's use of the word *lost* to describe the position of soul supports my view that in communicating in this way and at this level, I am providing a dimension that was largely missing in the lives of individuals and companies, of which they are starved and for which they are hungry. A discussion in the research group shows my attempts at finding this dimension:

*Jill ... this metaphorical context ... is something that I draw on all the time when I'm working.
It's a common ground that we all have, whereas on the surface we don't have a common*

ground. I'm a facilitator and they're company members, and somehow underneath all that there is this place that we can meet. But we can't just go into it. It's not OK just to drop or dip into it.

Barbara Is it what Moreno would call the archetypal level?

Jill Hm I should think so ...

Taped discussion in Research Group 14th June 1991

I will now give an account of working in this mode: a personal experience of body knowing which took place in the Bath Research Group. This experience falls across both the Affective and the Imaginal modes, but the presentation of it properly falls under the imaginal heading since part of the function of this mode is to work on and make explicit the experiential knowledge of the Affective mode, thus creating presentational knowledge which can be shared.

The "Eisler Day" Experience

The first account marks a major breakthrough in my acknowledgement of experiential knowing. The experience impacted my consciousness on so many different levels, effectively knocking the logical left brain aside, and commanding my attention and respect.

The whole thing came to a head during a discussion in the Research group of Riane Eisler's *"The Chalice and the Blade"*. In spite of having strongly engaged with the book, I was experiencing difficulty in getting a grip on the discussion intellectually so that I could join in. As far as I remember, the critical point of the discussion turned around the disruption of gylanic or partnership cultures, where women and men shared power, by invading patriarchs who oppressed women. Links were also being made with a previous discussion of Morris Berman's *"Coming to our Senses"* and the oppression of the planet by the increasingly destructive and patriarchal forces in our present society. I later described the difficulty I was having as "falling into the gaps between the words". At the time it was a primarily physical experience.

*I was **experiencing** the discussion and the book at an emotional, intuitive, and above all physical level, with hardly any intellectual component at all, beyond the fact that I was noticing what was going on, and making connections to other things happening in my life.*

A strong physical component of the whole experience was that I had my back and neck manipulated the day before. A long-standing dislocation had been worked on, the manipulation had been difficult and dramatic, and it had left me with strange, spaced-out sensations afterwards. That morning I had been pleased by the absence of pain ... and by the freedom of movement ... The image I had of my back while sitting in the group was of something newly free and supple, but also soft and vulnerable. I was at some level concerned as to how to keep it

soft and supple while also protecting its vulnerability. I felt a bit like a snail or a tortoise might feel without its shell.

Another strand interweaving with this was the sudden image which had struck me on the road just outside Bath. At the time it seemed unrelated to anything, but as soon as I started to speak about it, my words echoed back at me such obvious connections that I was puzzled not to have noticed them as they happened. While driving, suddenly my perspective flipped from seeing the view ahead as a road to drive along, to seeing it as earth covered in a tarmac crust. For a short moment I was more aware of the underlying earth I couldn't see, than the surface tarmac of the everyday road. And in that perception I identified with the earth, and experienced the tarmac as irksome and oppressive.

It was through this image, of the pain of the earth, that the tears first started to well up and silently overflow, like some sort of independent force or process which just happened to be taking place in my body. It seemed that my physical state, the image I had seen, and the subject under discussion combined to allow the tears to flow. I felt that they were my contribution to the discussion. My problem was that, one no-one seemed to be aware of them at the time, and that if they had been, it would have been me-in-distress that they noticed, rather than tears "discussing". The question is "how do tears discuss?". Which is clearly a close relation of "how do you write a watery thesis?". I meandered from letting them show to concealing them, and probably because concealment had habit and convention on its side, it won. In retrospect it seems like a missed opportunity, or an escape; at the time none of this was quite so conscious or clear. It never is. That is the problem.

So how could I proceed with sharing that, and making a contribution to the discussion, albeit not an "intellectual" one? The offerings I would make would be of images and feelings, sensations and metaphors. I might ask myself the following questions, and answer them.

- o what colour do I see?
- o what pictures or images do I see?
- o what are the physical sensations?
- o what is my skin doing?
- o what's my temperature?
- o do I feel pain? where?
- o what does my back/neck/gut feel like?
- o what feeling can I identify?
- o what was the trigger for any of the above?
- o what other occasions or events are brought to mind?
- o what is my picture of myself?
- o what animal or plant, or other living thing do I identify with?
- o what object would best describe my condition?

*If I were able to cultivate the presence of mind to ask and answer these questions (aloud), and the group had the patience to listen, the results would very probably not seem relevant to the discussion in hand. With some analysis, however, I think that picture would change. But as with any sharing of any intensely personal stuff, the worry is that it would only be relevant to me in understanding my pathology or patterns, and of no general interest whatsoever. That may be my worry, but it is not my experience, either of sharing my own personal stuff, or of listening to other people's. Why is it that sharing personal **thoughts** is acceptable and easy, while sharing personal "stuff" (and why "stuff" indeed?) is so problematic?*

Journal 14th March 1991

Writing this and sharing it with the group at a subsequent meeting was a liberating experience for me, helped by a suggestion that we reflect upon and write about the *process* rather than the content of our reading.

Acknowledging this intuitive process allowed me to reframe a trait in myself that I had previously seen as a shortcoming. When facilitating a group, I often experienced a time lapse between the occurrence of a critical incident and my ability to interpret it and act on that understanding. I realise that my strategy for working on that time lapse in order to reduce it was at least to some extent misguided, because I had not been "seeing" what was really happening. I was too pre-occupied with the figure to notice the ground: so busy beating myself up for not being able to think fast on my feet and be swift, analytical and incisive, that I failed to see that lurking in the shadow of that elapsed time was something valuable to be explored, a source of insight rather than a handicap.

It has been suggested to me that this should be a *faster* way of knowing, but while this is, in some sense true, I think that, for two distinct reasons, it is not faster in practice. The first is that, most of the time, strong inhibitors need to be overridden in order to tune in at this level. Usually either the signals are not so strong, or I am not so open as was the case on the Eisler day. The second reason is that, although the internal, tacit *knowing* may be instantaneous, the process of mediating that knowing, first through image and then via language, first to oneself and then to others, takes time. I will now describe that surfacing process.

On the Eisler day I was experiencing my own and the group's process at a much deeper, more fundamental level than usual. In terms of John Heron's up-hierarchy (of Affective, Imaginal, Conceptual, and Practical modes) I was functioning first of all in the Affective mode, resonating with the discussion through participation in sensations and feelings, the pre-linguistic stage of experiential knowledge. This stage had begun with a direct physical intervention, manipulation of my back, and produced an altered state of consciousness as well as physical sensations: soft, supple, tears welling.

Next came the images and metaphors of the Imaginal mode: the tortoise without its shell, the earth with a tarmac crust. These were also not quite dependent on language. They started as pictures of sensations and emotions, presentational knowledge produced in response to my need to understand the experience, and a necessary preliminary to the making of a metaphor which requires language.

It was only at the next stage of examining the images to make sense of them, express and communicate them, that I started to verbalise and move toward the Conceptual mode. It seems to me that the distinction between Presentational and Conceptual knowledge is somewhat elusive. For me, Presentational knowledge is essentially emergent at the point of bringing awareness to experience, as in my expression "tears discussing". At the later stage, of commenting on or discussing this, "tears discussing" becomes a concept. As in Heron's model, so in my process, the presentational knowledge of the Imaginal mode forms an interface and a bridge between the Affective mode and the Conceptual mode.

A further stage of understanding this massive experience was to analyse the phrase: 'falling into gaps between people's words', and to gather associations for each word. I commented that most of the associations I came up with read like victim statements. Later that month I recorded co-counselling about the figure and the ground, referred to the Eisler day 'perspective flip' of the earth covered in tarmac in that connection, but made no link to gaps in words. It was not until a month later, in a strange migraine twilight, that I really began to grasp that piece of the web, even if somewhat uncertainly.

I'm thinking that if I just stay with that not understanding, not get cross or anxious, but I actually stay with it and think about what I could be picking up intuitively that's going on in that communication, quite apart from the intellectual import of the words, maybe that's when I can tune into the emotional content and the metaphor behind it all. And maybe that's when I do pick up the images that come out later, because I must pick that up as I'm going along without realising I'm doing it. It doesn't all create itself at the point of writing it down, it must be building somewhere, over a period.

If I value the sort of image-thinking that I do, then maybe I can see that as the back-drop to the words, which actually informs the words with a much richer meaning than if they stood on their own. And if I can tune into that, it's a very valuable thing to be doing, as valuable as understanding the words.

Journal June 1991

What is interesting about this monologue is that it includes a description of my physical state. As on the Eisler day significant learning or understanding is taking place, and it seems to come from my body which is sending a very powerful message which eventually I cannot

ignore. I need to flag this as a powerful way of knowing in its own right which I often neglect. I am half aware of its importance at the time and comment on how the manner reflects the content of the reflection:

... thinking about the business of thinking and falling in between words — and feeling I was falling in between living and consciousness.

... it seems actually a lot easier to talk about it lying here in the sort of half light with my eyes closed, in the sort of half consciousness that having a migraine gives you. I've actually been in that state now for about 2 days. Yeah, I feel as if I'm a part of the ground, part of the background. ...

Now, that is interesting, because it occurs to me that the way of talking about this thing is very congruent with the nature of the thing. Talking about the shadow side, the background, the process, as opposed to the figure, the action, the task, and it's a very low key shadowy way to be talking about it.

Journal 17th-19th May 1991

A week later in Cornwall I finally took a stronger hold on the positive value of falling in the gaps, and noticed that this knowledge was held in my body. The entry here noted that we have such a tendency to value the words, that we fail to notice that falling into the gaps provides an opportunity to read between the lines. I referred to myself as “*constantly handling the ground*” while others are pre-occupied with the figure, describing my activity as “*unspeakable, unacceptable, inadmissible*”. I remember a trick learnt from Goethe years ago as a student of German, of hanging pictures upside down, to avoid concentrating on the object portrayed, and in order to see more clearly the form and relationships. There is yet another connection with a technique in learning to draw — draw the shadow, not the highlighted area, draw the spaces in between the objects, and the objects will emerge. All of these things underline and confirm the value of the process I have been exploring. It is as though I don't allow myself to fully admit that yet. It needs time to be absorbed.

Falling into the gaps between the words also means falling into silence. In silence we can contact feeling and listen to the body. This is what happens in meditation.

Meditating is sliding into the spaces between things; falling into the gap between my heartbeats; living in the pause between the moments. It is hard to let myself fall.

Found on a yellow post-it, undated

It is also in the gaps between the words that we can come face to face with the shadow self, those parts of the self that we are not willing to admit to consciousness, of which we may be afraid, and from which we are protected by the light of reason.

Using Metaphor

I will now describe another example of working very differently in the imaginal mode, using metaphor to help my understanding as a professional facilitator.

This example demonstrates how Presentational knowing helped me to understand an important aspect of a group I was facilitating. Again the imaginal mode acted as a bridge between the Affective mode of feeling where I am more at home, and the Conceptual and Practical modes inhabited, at least during working hours, by most business people I meet through my work. When I am facilitating, I often tune in to the Imaginal mode of understanding, and act on the images which are there, sometimes with no conscious at-the-time awareness, either to understand what I have done, or to work out what I should do. The image can act as a bridge between my world and the world of a participant in a group.

In this case an image represented a person in a group behaving as a joker in a way which I, as facilitator, found difficult to handle and which had hindered the process of establishing a safe environment on the first day. As on the Eisler day the image reflected the physical, emotional and spiritual tensions of the context, giving clues to the energy, need, and potential which was latent in the behaviour, but masked by it, not yet acknowledged.

The insight I needed into the reason for the behaviour was provided by the image that came to me of this young man as a jack-in-the-box. At first the image seemed frivolous, and too much in the spirit of his jokes to be helpful. With hindsight I understand that it was precisely this quality, and the fact that it grew out of the problem, which made it helpful. At this stage I didn't explore it in any depth, only drawing out one key characteristic — that of the essentially irrepressible energy of the jack-in-the-box, together with the paradox that it is repressed by the lid, which is in the control of someone else. This allowed me to go beyond my sense of being irritated and jangled by the behaviour, to the possible reason and need behind it.

I could now see that energy was the issue here, energy which could be used in the group if it had an appropriate outlet. Also, if the energy issue were addressed, the dilemma of how to protect the group (and the jack-in-the-box) from the joking without further oppressing the jack-in-the-box, would probably not arise. This did turn out to be the case. I commented on the energy by introducing discussion of the difficulty of containing restlessness, both in the room on the course, and in the organization during a working day. I also included some physical movement and shifts of environment into the structure of the day. These not only appeared to solve the problem, but were positive in their own right.

When I analysed the metaphor at a later date more fully using a cognitive map, these meanings were re-inforced and fleshed out. The map includes the comment:

understanding grew out of an intuitive image, and thinking via cognitive map.

Journal 29th September 1989

"Understanding" here refers to the insight that grows out of the Affective and Imaginal modes and belongs on the path of Expression; and "thinking" is an analytical activity of the Conceptual mode, lying on the path of Explanation.

Let us look at the transition from image to metaphor in this example. The first difficulty I have is in noticing that the image is there. The not-noticing arises, I believe, from a learned habit of devaluing the imaginal world, particularly in the context of traditional, 'male' organizations, as a result of being teased for, and embarrassed by, my own pre-occupation with that world in the past. Discovering the validity and usefulness of these imaginal messages to myself and others is helping the process of unlearning that habit, and making noticing easier. As with the recollection of dreams, this becomes easier, the more I honour and explore the messages which do get through.

Having caught the image, the next problem arises in externalising it when it seems too elusive, or "unspeakable" to talk about. A good first step in this process is to describe it verbally out loud, so that I can hear my own words reflected back to me, and notice the puns and the double-entendres. At this point the words seem to assume a life of their own, and carry a richness of metaphorical meaning, more noticeable, and seemingly more valid, when voiced and acquiring an existence independent of me. Thus the image speaks, as it were, for itself and the reality it represents suddenly becomes very clear and the way forward much easier.

Imagery and metaphor are bridging tools which, for me, spontaneously emerge at the intersection between the outer, factual world and the inner world of fantasy and feeling. Discovering a metaphor is like obtaining a passport which allows an easy transition back and forth between two levels of reality. The use of metaphor allows both facilitator and participants to communicate about, and work on, more than one level simultaneously: It allows expression of emotions and fantasies while remaining grounded in the everyday reality, and exploration of futures and potential while staying rooted in the present. And if the going gets uncomfortable, frightening or embarrassing in the context, it is easy to subtly shift the balance, to make the figure-ground flip of perspective, so that one is simply talking of everyday things.

Balancing the Intuitive, Conceptual, and Practical Modes

Having spent so much time owning, valuing, and exploring intuitive ways of knowing, I felt the need for balance. An exploration into analytical and logical thinking modes led me to

examine the semiotics of Roland Barthes' and his treatment of myth as a second-order language or metalanguage. The subsequent discussion in the research group recorded my struggle to communicate these concepts. I wanted to achieve a balance between intuition and logic, needed to prove that I could, and needed the group's encouragement. But they were reluctant to "allow" my need to do this, protesting at my departure from my preferred thinking style. Deborah was the first to voice her frustration.

Deborah: ... I want you to somehow speak from your own knowing and have confidence in that own knowing.

Jill: Hmm. [long pause] For me that feels very important, but it also feels important that I can actually understand those ... other things and I feel that there is a connection between the two, and I want to be able to find it and get hold of it, and it's actually just eluding me at the moment. (Sighing)

Peter: You see I have a feeling that people like this, people who write about semiotics, are ... trying to understand feminine things in a masculine way. But it feels like ... this kind of stuff that you're talking about "tears as part of an intellectual discussion" is very watery, and there's something about the semiotics, as if you are almost trying to grab it. It feels to me there's something paradoxical about that.

Jill: (Tearful) I'm having a sense of frustration. ...I need to hang on to the right to grapple with this.

Bob: It seems to me that ... maybe the intervention of Deb's was about saying "stay in one world", and yet it seems to me now, ... everything you're about is trying to bridge between two worlds.

Whole group: Yeah, yes, yes!

Taped discussion in Research Group 14th June 1991

An obvious place to look for integration of thinking and feeling modes was in the work of writers such as de Bono, Buzan and van Oech who advocate lateral thinking, and aim to integrate the functions of the left and right brain in order to extend and enhance our use of our potential brain power. What they offer are techniques designed to develop creativity and primarily aimed at the commercial and progressive educational markets. Their work is interesting, and I do not underrate its importance in bringing acceptance of right brain thinking into predominantly left brain organisations. However, there is little in their writing that honours the mystery of being human except at the level of acknowledging how much there is yet to be known about the brain.

This missing dimension was also a feature of a model I found otherwise helpful, Howard Gardner's model of Seven Intelligences which I first encountered at the 1991 conference of

the Society for Effective Affective Learning (SEAL). Although this had recently been amended to include eight dimensions, it was still presented with the eighth, significantly called intuitive-emotional, tacked on as an afterthought.

1. Logical/mathematical
2. Linguistic
3. Musical
4. Visual/spatial
5. Kinaesthetic
6. Interpersonal
7. Intrapersonal
8. Intuitive/emotional

This model has extended my ability to think about thinking, has opened up new perspectives on what constitutes thinking, and has challenged assumptions that the logical/mathematical and the verbal/linguistic modes are the only really valid thinking styles. It has a basic simplicity which has impact and clarity and invites discussion about what could be added and how sections could be sub-divided. It has also served as inspiration and validation for many people I have shown it to who considered themselves failures according to the traditional model of education.

My misunderstanding of the purpose of SEAL is in itself interesting. I thought it was dedicated to learning effectively about affect. In fact it is concerned with using affect to enhance the effectiveness of teaching methods. In other words I expected a focus on the Affective mode, but found it rooted for the most part firmly in the Conceptual mode.

Many sessions at the SEAL conference focused on developing accelerated learning in the teaching of languages and technical subjects. Accelerated does not just imply faster, but learning with a deeper and more integrated understanding and better retention. The ideas were fascinating and the methods stimulating and fun, but although the affective mode was valued here, it was mostly being used as a means to an end and I saw a danger of methods becoming mechanistic, being without grounding in Heron's participative modes. I have similar reservations about Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), also well represented at the conference, in spite of being impressed by its effectiveness in some contexts and in the right hands. I had the impression that holistic at SEAL meant whole brain, and that many methods, as presented, lacked soul or seemed contrived.

I worry on reflection that my assessment of the SEAL conference is inaccurate or unfair. For I remember many experiential sessions offered by people exploring, for example, movement, sensation, non-verbal communication, and sound which were valuable. However, the flavour

of them was of a "How to" nature with a focus on delivery which placed them for me in the Practical rather than in the Affective mode which is more about "Being". It is possible that, in order to "sell" these methods to teachers, trainers, readers, and corporate cultures, presenters understandably edit out the more esoteric philosophical origins of their methods. This may explain why this is not the territory for grounding an epistemology.

The effects of this requirement for "deliverables" is not, however, all bad. On one occasion when asked at short notice to facilitate a workshop session on handling difficult people in groups, I set out to examine my own process (which I knew I must have) as I drove to the event. The result of this was the "SWIG" process described in Chapter 13. Since surfacing that process conceptually I was able to give it more systematic attention than was possible at an intuitive level. This makes the process accessible to teach, and also more reliable. In this case the jolt of practical necessity brought the conceptual mode to bear on intuition with constructive results.

As described earlier in terms of Heron's up-hierarchy, I more often move from intuition to action, leap-frogging the conceptual mode, and then returning to it later. There are two phases to conceptualising: 1) articulating to myself which takes me halfway; 2) communicating to others which requires a quite other degree of articulation and clarity. In getting from one to the other I may well talk to myself.

Having a conceptual model of what I do enhances my process in three ways.

1. It allows me to be more consistent, because moving from a lot of particular examples means I generate a comprehensive checklist. My intuition on its own would probably not be triggered to cover all points.
2. It allows me to present my process to others and share it with them. In fact the need to do this is what often triggers the conceptualisation.
3. It externalises it, puts it out there, so that it can be talked about, compared, extended, modified. The danger here is that it will become too much of a thing, and rigid so that it isn't open to modification. One of the reasons that people keep such processes tacit is that they fear losing ownership or control and the freedom to be flexible or inconsistent; or fear being laughed at or attacked. And one of the strategies against attack is to become rigid. Or what started out as a description of a loose process becomes a rigid model in the public domain.

The exploration described in this chapter allowed me to value fully my intuitive ways of knowing to the point that I seemed in danger of losing touch with more traditional skills. Or was part of that due to the panic of having truanted too long from that school and enjoyed

myself too much? Whether or not that was the case, my commitment remains to an *and ... and* integration of intuitive and logical thinking, a synergy that is more likely to be effective at a practical level.

Chapter 6

The Magic of Menstruation — dragons, blood, fire, and water

I referred in Chapter 5 to the body as a source of knowing, and in this chapter I explore what that source means to me as a woman, a process of discovering the transpersonal or spiritual through that deep physical connection. I seek to uncover and release meanings which have become obscured and distorted behind our cultural taboos.

... during that time a woman lives much closer to self-knowing than usual; the membrane between the unconscious and the conscious thins considerably. Feelings, memories, sensations that are normally blocked from consciousness pass over into cognizance without resistance.

Estés 1992 p.293

... imagine that when you bled you were able to use the psychic powers that open and become available to you at this magical time of the month.

Noble 1991a p22

Imagine that deep down in every woman's process, there is an unconscious pull to remember the ecstasy of this ancient, sacred encounter with the forces of the earth and sky coming through her body. And at the same time she had been socialized ... to be afraid to manifest such a longing. Is PMS so surprising under the circumstances?

Noble 1991a p29

Imagine a world in which menstrual blood was once again accepted as a magical fluid with the power to nurture new life.

Owen 1992

In truth, menstruation is a time which is absolutely taboo in the most ancient sense of the word, which means "sacred." It is explicitly nonordinary ... It is, for humans, the major magical event of the lunar month, corresponding to the waxing and waning cycle of the moon and the ebb and flow of the oceanic tides. It is the precise way in which the human animal is linked to the ... upper world and the underworld of shamanic reality.

Noble 1991a p14

Reading the authors quoted above challenged my view of my menstrual cycle. This and subsequent experiences of monitoring my own experience and exploring the issue with others has led me to a radical re-evaluation and reframing of my menstruation experience. My original view, as taught me by the prevailing culture, was almost entirely negative. What

is so remarkable about this is that a society can invest so much in hiding, or tainting with shame, functions of the body upon which its future so directly depends.

In this exploration I set out to break taboos (in the modern sense of the word), not in order to shock or offend, but in order to honour the taboo in the ancient sense of the word as sacred. One purpose was to re-value menstruation for myself; another to move it away from being unmentionable and embarrassing, towards being discussible. To do that I had to lose my own shame and embarrassment and become comfortable with such discussion. My attempts at this, which I share in this chapter, have been profoundly *uncomfortable*, but effective in achieving both purposes.

Menstruation and the Research

I did not readily accept the relevance of menstruation to the research. The connection was presented to me in March 1992 when I chose to try some flow of consciousness writing to get past a writing block. As a method it turned out to be an appropriate metaphor for the subject matter that emerged. To trigger the process I described a drawing from November 1990 of a visualisation experience in the Bath Research Group.

On the left of the page a large prehistoric type creature covered in scales, with a long, heavy tail, is standing in shadow by a door; on the right is a small Welsh-looking dragon in mid flight. The caption records that the old dragon represents how I discovered my research hibernating in an underground cavern. The seemingly impossible instruction to "take the research into your body" resulted in the sudden manifestation of the small fiery dragon which then "curled up in my bleeding stomach".

On my table is a very similar small metal dragon with wings spread, holding a small crystal ball. This dragon presented itself to me synchronistically later on the day of the visualisation, when I stopped on the way home to buy a present in an unfamiliar town. I parked outside an unknown shop and there in the window was a dragon looking just like the one I'd drawn.

Writings 20th March 1992

The reference to the dragon curling up in my bleeding stomach makes my first, and unconscious, connection between menstruation and dragons, and emphasises strongly the connection between menstruation and my research process.

Luisa Francia is explicit about the dragon connection in her book *Dragontime*, and I have used this metaphor to symbolise the creative power that is closely linked to sexuality, but is not sexual in the limited physical sense in which this word is primarily used today. This new perspective came too late in my life cycle to learn to call my remaining periods dragon times,

but the writing days that I booked in my diary went in as “dragon” days. The following lines of free association were written about my research dragons in the drawing already described.

*Dragon fire, dragon blood,
Fiery energy, sexual energy,
Uncoiling kundalini serpent energy.*

*Fiery Welsh dragon rising from the ashes
Of lumbering grey dragon.
Weighed down by his scales,
His fire has gone out.
He stays underground in his cave,
While the Idris dragon flies to the mountain top.*

*Caves where dragons live,
Caves where women menstruate.*

Fiery sexual energy rising in me out of the dark days of depression.

Writings 22nd March 1992

My body had already tried to draw my attention to the menstruation-research connection, but with culturally typical disregard for messages from the body I had failed to see the meaning in this. I had been missing the significance of the fact that for some time my periods had obstinately and persistently adjusted themselves so that I was almost always menstruating at Bath Research Group meetings. It seems to me that this was a particular way of the universe pointing out, not only the importance of the menstrual cycle, but the context in which I should be attending to it.

I had also largely ignored the strong message of heavy periods over the last two or three years. Only when I started reading about menstruation and the power that women can contact at this time, did I think to look for a meaning. It then occurred to me that, if nothing else, the heavy periods had been screaming for my attention to this area. *"What about this!", "When is she going to notice?"* Maybe the heavy periods are an attempt to make me do what I most need to do at those times — rest and reflect and refrain from depleting low energy by carrying on as usual. But are they not also yet another message flagging the need for me to attend to the sacred?

Some Personal History

Although unaware of this sacred aspect of menstruation, I nevertheless have had an ambivalent attitude to the disruption, inconvenience, exhaustion and sometimes even physical shock that my periods cause. At one level I cannot cope, I am indignant and I

protest. The handicap of being a woman seems outrageous. At another level, in the last few years of having riotously heavy periods, I revel in it, celebrate the privilege of being a woman, and wonder at the force of this chaos which suddenly has me at its mercy. In my fantasy I want to gloop these great, dark clots of blood everywhere, play with them, and feel the weight of them, although in practice I feel totally unable even to contemplate collecting this blood as fertiliser for house plants as Noble suggests. My ambivalence is understandable in the light of what Noble terms the *terrible reversal* that has resulted in the *sacred menstrual cycle of our ancestors* becoming a *pathology in the eyes of modern medicine*. (Noble 1991a). I notice my ambivalence not only in my secret delight in the mess and the smells, but also in the way I hang on to the function, in common with many other women. I was horrified at the suggestion that I have a hysterectomy, even though I could see the advantage of never having to bother again with tampons and pads, stained knickers and ruined clothes.

Looking back over my experience of menstruation yields significantly little. I don't remember my mother's periods. They were clearly very discretely handled, although judging from the number of gynaecological operations she had, they were probably not easy. I do remember at age ten or eleven finding her box of tampons in a drawer, guiltily reading the instructions, and taking one to experiment with. I also remember that "the talk" came at least a year later.

The message that anything to do with reproduction was unmentionable and somehow shameful, was strong. For instance there was a book in the house at that time called *Petticoat Surgeon* which contained a graphic description of a calf being born, and frank references to childbirth. I remember being severely reprimanded for sneaking it out of the cupboard for an illicit read with my friends.

Other memories float to the surface which seem vaguely connected, in that they probably helped to shape my image of myself as a woman. They involve the process of learning which parts of my body and other people's I was allowed to touch, see, or mention, or rather, which were forbidden.

Menstruating has never previously made me feel special or connected with spiritual power. Apart from the status accorded at school to those who had "started", I only recall one positive reference to menstruation in my life, by someone who honoured the mystery. Sometimes a heavy period can feel cathartic, bringing a sense of emptiness, exhaustion and peace similar to sensations I had to a much greater degree after giving birth. This sense of well-being depends on being able to rest, and may well be short-lived, connected as it is with a withdrawal from the busy world. It is a giving in, an acceptance that this function, whether it is feeding a baby or bleeding, has taken over my life. I have abdicated all other responsibilities, there are no conflicts or tensions, and my consciousness is resting in my

body. I have sunk into the ground of my being, living in Heron's Affective mode, and participating in being a woman.

How different is the experience of a similar period on days when I have to work, have to drag my attention out of its pre-occupation with body function, put on unsuitable clothes, and worry about how my body will "let me down" in front of an audience.

The status of those who started their periods early soon evaporated. Menstruation was referred to as "the curse", and the attitude of matrons and games staff was brisk and jolly. Large packets of Dr Whites were issued from the big cupboard in matron's office, and two sanitary belts were required on the clothing list. There was nothing mystical about my envy of those who really suffered with their periods — I just would have given anything to avoid the daily two-hour games slot. The other thing I remember is the use made of sanitary pads in the sanatorium where the loops were hooked round the knobs on either side of a door to stop the door banging noisily or closing completely. Newcomers to the "san" used to giggle nervously when they saw them.

I'm surprised to find I have only just remembered the crippling migraines which accompanied my periods in my late thirties. The bleeding itself was not problematic, but the headaches would last three or four days, moving from one side of the head to the other, and reaching a crescendo on the third day. They left me wiped out, and I seemed to be losing one week in four out of my life. These migraines took me by a circuitous route to a marriage guidance counsellor, who pretty soon inquired of my relationship with my mother. I replied that it was fine, and assured her that this was not where the problem lay. Ten minutes later I was recovering, astonished, from a frenzy of hot angry tears, and was even more astonished that the migraines stopped after that and never recurred. I have had isolated migraines since, but never in a regular pattern.

Some time after the migraines, I discovered co-counselling, and, like many others, used sessions to rage repeatedly against both my parents with results that gradually healed both me and my relationship with them. It now seems more constructive and more interesting to take my mother as a *representative* mother in the context of the counsellor's question.

I don't want to lay blame on my mother. Certainly I have felt anger at her apparent need to control my life, but have learned to understand the context of concern and the cultural influences upon her. I choose now to be angry *alongside* her, or on her behalf. She has had, I am sure, plenty to be angry about, both in the medical handling of my birth, and in the consequent gynaecological traumas she suffered, and in the events around her own birth which she barely survived. The fact that this anger has probably never been directly expressed simply results from her being of her own generation of women who do not protest.

We have come a long way from the "gynocide" which Mary Daly describes, at the hands of male gynaecologists after the witch burnings, but women still suffer from members of the medical profession, both male and female. In spite of having had some excellent care, I have experienced doctors and nurses who have inflicted pain and insults, treated my body as an object of which I could have no relevant knowledge, and me as unworthy of consultation and information. It has been the exception rather than the rule to be given sensitive consideration as an intelligent inhabitant of my body. More often I have been ignored or patronised, and as a result avoid traditional treatment wherever possible in favour of alternative practitioners who treat me as a whole person. So my guess is that my mother and I have more to share than to dispute about, if we knew how to do the sharing. Maybe her need to control my life was driven by the lack of control she had over her own life and body, and a wish to protect me from similar problems.

Suppose, however, that my counsellor had asked me about my relationship with the Great Mother, or Mother Earth? I wouldn't have understood the question, but now that I do understand, it seems an appropriate question to ask now.

I don't have to follow the thread of that question and its answer very far to start feeling acutely uncomfortable as my twentieth century career-oriented self encounters the primitive female in me. I can feel perfectly justified in feeling frustrated about losing almost one week of my life in four to pain and incapacity. But could I cope with devoting an equivalent amount of time to meditation, centring, and contemplation of the central values of my life without interruption from the outside world? I say these things are important to me, but am I prepared to give them enough time and attention? Would I be too anxious, or bored, or lonely?

Pinkola Estés argues that women need purposeful solitude, not only at the time of the menses, but at any time to "invite a conversation between ourselves and the wild soul".

My experience of analyzing women leads me to believe that much of modern women's premenstrual crankiness is not just a physical syndrome but is equally attributable to her being thwarted in her need to take enough time away to revivify and renew herself.

Estés 1992 p.293

She laughs at the claims of early anthropologists that menstruating women were considered unclean and made to stay apart.

All women know that even if there were such a forced ritual exile, every single woman, to a woman, would, when her time came, leave the village hanging her head mournfully, at least till she was out of sight, and then suddenly break into a jig down the path, cackling all the way.

Yes, I can identify with that jig, having at last come to value being a woman and to value women friends. The answer to all my fears expressed above of being bored or anxious or lonely lies in sharing this time with other women. Ironically it is only at this time of menopause that I have found a group of women with whom to share these issues, who are concerned with healing the wounds inflicted by the dominant culture and constructing an alternative framing of the bleeding time as sacred to the goddess. Busy lives and geographical distance do not allow regular sharing but coming together occasionally gives women courage to be more themselves in the outside world.

Reframing Experience in our Culture

Luisa Francia, in her book *Dragontime* describes the Tuareg mountain women in Algeria who go without tampons or pads or underpants when they menstruate, partly controlling the flow, partly spreading their legs to let it fall if it needs to. My first response was — it would mess up carpets, people would slip on it, it is *unthinkable*! It is unthinkable for reasons of social taboo, climate, and living style. Then I notice the humour involved and the lightness. And it strikes me that menstruation is not sacred, or unmentionable, or messy, or a nuisance, or painful. It is *all* of these things, very often at the same time, and, if I am to cope with and embrace the rich complexity of being a mysterious, primitive, and successful twentieth century woman, the thing I need more than anything else is a very big sense of humour.

I can use the Tuareg women as a metaphor of openness that fits very well with my developing strategy (see Chapters 13 and 16) of making metacommunications about difficult, complex, or ambiguous situations. With a light touch and attention to appropriate control I can move the subject of menstruation out of the undiscussible zone into the public domain.

However, I do not live in the Algerian mountains or in a village, nor do the corporate career women I work with. I doubt that they would see the benefit of such openness or of solitary time out, but would be angry at the implication of vulnerability and the interruption to their high flying lives. What of the practicalities of earning a living? What of the demands of the outside, pacey, male-defined world upon which I and they depend for that living? What if the only week everyone can manage for an important team development event is the week when a period is due? What if I come on early in the week when the VAT falls due? What if I can no longer predict the date of my period? A lot of anger wells up in me at the cultural twist which has shifted the bleeding time from a pivotal to a peripheral position in the scheme of things that matter. I begin to understand the American Indian healing process for menstrual pain which Lara Owen describes, involving digging a hole in the garden, expressing into it all negative thoughts about being a woman, and filling in the hole.

The conflict I experience here is central to the dilemma of how a woman survives in this culture without becoming less of a woman. If I want to make a special case for women who are menstruating, I run the risk of undermining all the progress towards equality and independence so far made; if I throw away the importance of the sacredness of that monthly time in favour of behaving "as normal", then the value, and integrity, and power which is special to women, and for which they have been valued in centuries long past, and even now in some places, is dismissed, cancelled out, flushed away with the invisible tampon which enables us to swim and ride and behave as if nothing untoward was happening.

An exercise at an NLP workshop highlighted the dilemma for me. The exercise was designed to allow the worker to gain a new perspective on an unhelpful behaviour pattern, and, as a result of the insights gained, to attain a more resourceful state in a similar situation in future. The context of the exercise was driving a car, and we were asked to recall an occasion when we were driving badly. I chose a day when I had been aware that I lacked fluidity and co-ordination, failed to anticipate other drivers, and consistently just missed synchronising my moves with theirs, to the point of turning out in the path of another car at a roundabout. To compound the error, I noticed it, regretted it, and therefore hesitated. Hot embarrassment further delayed my recovery, and I finally accelerated off in confusion, only too aware that the imagined "woman driver" curses of the other driver were hitting their mark with more than usual accuracy because I was menstruating.

The nature of a conflict became clear from the exercise: my menstrual state was pulling my attention inward, in a context where it was essential that my attention be directed outward. Driving is essentially a visual activity demanding an "up and out" body posture, and outward extension of consciousness to include not only the four corners of the car, but also the position and pattern of movement of other traffic, shape of bends, camber of the road, and a multitude of other constantly changing variables. Menstruation on the other hand, is a deeply kinaesthetic experience which demands a pulling in of consciousness and attention to the stomach and genital area, an intuned, even foetal, body inclination, and a tuning in to the twinges and rumblings, smells and internal juices of the body. Considered in that way it is a miracle that I and other drivers have survived my excursions at this time of the month for so many years.

This example of driving while menstruating is one of fundamental lack of congruence. One solution which I find helps me most to overcome other forms of non-congruence is to make a metacommunication about it — to make a statement about how I am feeling, so that the state is shared. By being open, I can recover congruence. In the role of facilitator I find that this not only helps me, but gives others permission to be more open. I have been advised against this strategy by those who see a danger of becoming too vulnerable. Whilst I would

always be ruled to some extent by appropriateness, I find that the risk pays off, and see those advisers running a comparable danger of becoming too distant, and of justifying their distance with the label "professionalism".

In the context of menstruation, most of society joins these counsellors of caution against any embarrassing disclosures; either to protect themselves from hearing; or to protect me from being written off as irrational, unreliable, and moody. Phrases such as "I didn't need to know that" and "it must be that time of the month" spring to mind. Society conspires to keep menstruation at the kinaesthetic level, preferably with no olfactory leakage. Making verbal reference to it, raises it to the auditory level of awareness; and if the language used is at all graphic (reference to blood or knickers is enough), it creeps into the visual field almost as offensively as a stain on a skirt or a chair. And, oh, the shame of that! There have been times when I have felt a sense of pride and glee at the riotous mess in the toilet, and would love to show off, and call in my nearest and dearest to witness it. But of course I don't. I clean up and flush away until all is immaculate.

I have however found more appropriate ways of making menstruation discussible, which, although personally risky, have not caused offence. I found myself doing this rather to my own surprise at the NLP workshop already referred to.

It is important that I notice that I have done much in the last few days to raise this bleeding issue to the level of auditory and shared awareness, considerably extending my personal comfort zone in this context. First came an animated discussion of this area of my research with a new female acquaintance over lunch. Also present were the male friend ... who had invited me to the workshop, and a woman I had recently met ... who just happened to be menstruating on that day. Next came the driving exercise with a male partner. Shortly after that I found myself discussing the findings of this exercise with a stranger who was male, and also subsequently making a contribution in the plenary session to the mixed audience of about fifty people.

Journal 28th March 1992

The consequence of this is that it begins to feel a comfortable and acceptable subject for discussion. Two days later a former student of mine came to consult with me about her plans to write or translate material about women's issues for women of her ethnic background, both in the UK and back home in Iran. It seemed natural to move from a conversation about assertiveness and confidence to share the exciting things I had been uncovering about menstruation, and that was the area that grabbed her most as a potential starting point.

To return to the problem of driving while menstruating, I notice that most of the suggested solutions I had from others focused on adapting my state to the needs of driving; whereas my own solutions were designed to modify the driving or the demands of the world to my

menstruating state. I appreciate the other solutions, acknowledge their logic, and may come to use them because they are practical, but meanwhile notice that they don't feel right. I also need to protest at being invited to readjust yet again to accommodate the need to travel and drive, just when I have started reframing menstruation for the first time as valuable, central and sacred. On the other hand, I do need to take into account modern driving conditions, or I may not be around to consider these issues.

A further, and major, reframing experience occurred much later, in 1994. I had started exploring my potential for healing with a psychic teacher, and the time was one of intense psychic activity. For this reason my view of the world had opened and shifted away from the socially programmed norm. I was thus afforded a brief interlude of experiencing which was free of the distortion that conditioning brings.

... I noticed ... a phenomenon at night (and occasionally in the evening) which I naturally associated with all the physical and psychic phenomena that have been going on. The experience was of a glowing heat pulsating gently and steadily from the very root centre of me, radiating out and out and out like concentric circles of fire starting in my centre and moving out beyond it to my aura, breaking through the skin in a sweat. It felt like strong positive energy and my first thought was that maybe this was healing energy beginning to manifest. It fascinated me and was intriguing rather than unpleasant, and unexpected rather than unwanted.

Journal 3rd March 1994

Thus I am absorbed in exploring a new and exciting sensation, until I have to combine that with mixing with other people. Then I record feeling uncomfortable, disoriented, claustrophobic, and immediately begin to reframe my experience to come into line with how they would define it:

*And it was **only then** that it occurred to me that what I had framed so positively might be the notorious hot flushes. I was about to feel foolish and embarrassed and relieved I hadn't mentioned it to anyone when a further thought struck me: "what if I had never heard of hot flushes?" and "did women in early civilisations have hot flushes?" Is all of that stuff a construction of modern, male gynaecology? And what if I pursue my original framing? I have to put aside ... embarrassment, ... fear of being pretentious or presumptuous, and look at very simple facts. Like the stages of being a woman — maid, mother, crone.*

And crone stage is the opportunity to channel nurturing beyond the self and the family to nurture and heal the community and the planet. The wise woman using her experience and the wisdom of maturity to benefit all. A new stage in the release of the Shakti.

And it all feels natural, reasonable, and part of a normal developmental progression, no more remarkable or presumptuous than having grey hair or wrinkles and stopping bleeding.

In groups with Vicki Noble I have experienced the "raising of heat" which is necessary to the healing process, and Vicki provides her own reframe of hot flushes (Noble 1991a p.36) as a cancer-preventing mechanism. There is little else positive in the literature about menopause, although plenty about the distortion of this period of women's life (Daly 1991; Northrup 1995) by male gynaecologists who see the menopause as a disease that needs treatment. Interestingly Northrup refers to a study of traditional and acculturated Navaho women (p. 421) where the former were found to have few menopausal symptoms.

Menstruation and the Sacred

The link that I made between dragons and menstruation happened intuitively, at Heron's Imaginal and Feeling levels, and equally intuitively I sense that menstruation is the place where the sexual, the creative, and the sacred meet. But this very powerful reframing goes right against my conditioning. However good the news, I find it disturbing to discover that the world is not as I was taught it was. I seek corroboration in order to "build a case" to stand against cultural messages, partly to convince myself, partly to experience over and over the sense of wonder and delight that this really is true.

The link between the sacred and menstrual blood is well documented. Lara Owen writes:

Ritual practices were connected to the monthly bleeding of women, and menstrual blood itself was highly valued as possessing magical power. The word ritual comes from the rtu, Sanskrit for menses. In the days before the sacrifice of living beings, menstrual blood was offered in ceremonies. Menstrual blood was sacred to the Celts, the ancient Egyptians, the Maoris, the early Taoists, the Tantrists and the Gnostics.

Owen 1992

Both Noble and Francia make the point that it was only after men took over from women as priests that sacrifice became necessary to provide ritual blood.

All my research points to the undeniable fact that shamanism is a phenomenon of the female group, and came out of the simultaneous bleeding together that occurred with each sacred lunar cycle. The first blood at the altar was menstrual blood, provided without sacrifice.

Noble 1991b

Male priests, lacking their own menstrual blood, substitute "precious life fluid" from sacrificial animals or vanquished enemies.

Francia 1991 p.26

Francia traces the connection of the dragon with the sacred and with menstruation through Tiamat, ancient dragon woman and Mesopotamian primeval mother whose menstrual place still stands at Tiamat on the Red Sea. Dragon blood became known for its special powers and dragon slayers of the later patriarchal era rolled in the blood to protect themselves. Dragons which were once revered came to symbolise that which men feared about women and to be regarded as evil.

The dragonly womanly might of Tiamat, Lilith, and Hydra are demeaned. Dragontime, bleeding time, becomes taboo. And menstruating women become demons of evil, not dragons of power.

Francia 1991 p.13

Shuttle and Redgrove make a similar point less poetically with reference to the persecution of witches in the Middle Ages. For another name for such a dragonly woman is a witch whose magic is the potential to be more psychically open during her bleeding.

In the Middle Ages it has been estimated that nine million women were burned as witches for exercising their natural crafts of midwifery, hypnotism, healing, dowsing, dream-study and sexual fulfilment. They were persecuted and burned by the Christian Church of that time, who wished only men to have power and ability, by men worshipping a male trinity.

Shuttle and Redgrove 1986 p.198

Numerous other writers have documented this history of the ancient goddess religions and cultures and the distortion of ancient myths and beliefs by incoming patriarchs. They include Riane Eisler (1990), Asphodel Long (1992) Charlene Spretnak (1993), Barbara Walker (1983), Baring and Cashford (1993), and Marija Gimbutas (1982 & 1987 etc.) whose work provides so much of the archaeological evidence. Bleakley writes of the wasted energy this has resulted in:

Men will tend to repress the creative 'witch' nature of women, and ... attempt to obtain the ... healing powers that menstrual blood carries. Women will tend to react against this repression ... This ... dissipates the energy that would otherwise be available for healing and creative interchange, ... initiations of men by women into women's mysteries, and women by men into men's mysteries.

Bleakley 1984 p. 12

In the context of this historical background I am beginning to see my anger against the church in a new light. I am wondering if it was not fuelled by messages against my womanhood which I was picking up at a unconscious level. I have avoided churches for years because I come out in a rage at the elitism, complacency, and pomposity I find in them. I am also struck with the contrast between the humourless doom and gloom of the

religion I was taught and the radiant joy and laughter I have seen in some mystics, teachers of Bhuddism, and followers of the goddess religion.

I was married to my first husband in church by my father-in-law, and I wonder what he would have had to say about all this. He was a gentle, thoughtful, and melancholy man as I knew him, having had some sort of breakdown or spiritual crisis in mid-life which had left him chronically depressed. His wife was much more of a vicar than he was, and did most of the parish work for him. He died several years ago, and I wish I could ask him now about the source and nature of his depression. When we visited there with the children I used to breastfeed the baby in another room, but he always found some good reason to come in and fetch or bring me something, and he would gaze and gaze as if trying to draw nourishment in through his eyes.

My sister-in-law had the same experience and we laughed together at his behaviour. We laughed lovingly, but we laughed because we had no frame for his behaviour other than that of rather pathetic, lustful old man, or sex-starved clergyman. Whereas, with a different cultural frame, we might have seen a man whose patriarchal religion had let him down, and who craved the warmth and richness of the goddess religions. His family would have thought it far-fetched to say the least, and imagine what would have been the reaction if he had expressed such a notion to his flock. They would have felt betrayed and outraged, seen him as wicked and pagan, or simply unhinged. If he'd been born a woman two centuries earlier, such a notion might have had him burnt at the stake, and I suspect that a similar and largely unconscious paradigm clash destroyed him inwardly.

I experience just such an uncomfortable paradigm clash involving the intertwinedness of the erotic and the sacred in finding my own spirituality. I referred to it in the last chapter by the shorthand "meditating to orgasm can't be right". An example of this is the following pre-menstrual meditation experienced in Cornwall in 1989. It is not an isolated experience, but one which I had the courage, conviction and space to write up more fully than usual. The meditation is one which I frequently use, particularly if I want to calm and collect a scattered consciousness, or when I need to find out where I am physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

The process involves an upward journey through terraced gardens which each have a colour corresponding to the chakra or rainbow colours. The traveller meets a wise being (part of her or his self) on the green terrace who remains as a companion to the top. The traveller may then ask a question and find an answer. On the return journey, they part on the green terrace where they met, and the traveller continues down alone.

Because the meditation is familiar to me there are references in this account to previous meditations and the plants and animals I encountered.

The whole passage could be framed, as a description of either masturbation, or a vision. I believe it is both.

Red terrace: has a mulberry tree, some beetroots, but mostly bare earth. It feels OK, it is resting, the earth.

Orange terrace: there is my honey-coloured cat stretched out looking languorous by an orange-ish mound. When I try to move on to the yellow terrace, it isn't there — I can't find the way out and am called back. I look at the mound and my own mound begins to swell and throb and open out. I visit it with my hand. The brown bear appears. I am holding my woman parts and cupping them outward, offering them. I am woman, not a woman, but woman-ness: primitive, fundamental, deeply connected with the earth, mysterious and fertile and open. The bear has a red hot poker in his hand, which is his penis. As it enters my woman-ness, the red hawk is there too, diving from high up, entering with his beak, without pain, without competition, part of a pattern, a deep rhythmic thrusting from the three of us. The orgasm is deep and fulfilling and complete in itself. Afterwards I close my mound over with both my hands just as I opened it with both, and feel a sense of self-containment and peace. And when I move on, I enter the yellow garden from a different gate, from the East instead of the South.

Yellow terrace: has shells of what was before the stuffed bird on the perch and the wooden box. They blow away like paper and leave a little grassy, mossy bed with dry, dead stalks in it, and one daffodil in the corner, near the gate to the green terrace. When I came in there were primroses on the grass bank by the gate. I clear the dry stalks and journey on.

Green terrace: lots of grass along the wall. It feels restful but I don't lie down this time. At the end it's Brown Bear looking pretty pleased with himself. The humour is nice.

Blue: we pass through unnoticed.

Violet: there is a carpet of violets, and he kneels and snuffles and nuzzles them, stroking them very gently and lovingly, caring and protecting them.

White: we sit by the sea and the lesson is — yes I am seesawing between the Spring-like get up and go of the East, with its red hawk energy, and the introverted West, needing to recharge, rest and sleep. The answer is to give the morning to the East, and allow the West to reclaim me in the evening. It is so simple!

On the way down nothing is remarkable except that the eastern gate is still there in the yellow terrace. But I go out by the customary South exit.

Journal 15-11-89

When I first considered including this experience here I expected to work from the journal entry, and to re-write it, presenting it in an "acceptable" way. To my surprise I found that not

only did it not need rewriting, but that I could not imagine writing it in any other way. The difficulty I anticipated was not in the writing but in making it available to be read.

I explored this further during a writing workshop in our Bath Research Group, when someone else read the passage aloud to me. I was then able to notice the difference between 1) the original experience which was a deeply moving, highly erotic, and sacred encounter; 2) reading my account to myself and appreciating the way I had written it up; and 3) hearing it read aloud which produced not only embarrassment and shame, but fear and pain.

The embarrassment and shame are on one level and result from the social taboo against talking about sexual activities. The fear and pain are at a deeper level. The fear concerns losing the preciousness of the experience in the face of censorship and shame. The pain is at the tearing apart of the sacred from the sexual at the hands of that same censorship. In the original experience the two are closely interwoven, and stay that way all the time they remain a part of my intimate personal experience. But the moment I bring them out into the world, I have the sense that they fly apart and become irreconcilable. The image I have is of two magnetic sheets which mutually repel each other, and I can no longer achieve even an overlay or overlap between them, let alone a merging.

Again the dominant paradigm threatens to destroy my own truth and sense of knowing and to vandalise my sacred space. Vicki Noble describes the resultant split in women's experience:

Women naturally become the suppressors of our own internal sexual experience anytime it threatens to externalize and expose us. We have internalized the cultural hatred toward our natural sexuality, as well as the sensible fears we adopt in order to survive, and this leaves us with two experiences: One happens on the inside and in secret, the other is expressed. Our inner reality is a garden, where we can come to know the Goddess and her ancient ways, in our dreams, fantasies, visions, and time alone in nature. The outer reality is more a performance, however you want me to be.

Noble 1991a p 183

Reconnecting through Ritual

Ritual is a way of externalising that inner reality and giving it a meaningful expression that can be shared and through which there can be a healing of the split between the inner and outer experience.

Ritual is a way of sharing with others across divides of space and time, and it is also a way of making a link between the personal and the archetypal. A part of ritual and healing is noticing and respecting the elements and natural objects and learning from their properties. for me has been identifying natural things that I am drawn to and feel empathy with.

As a child of ten I understood ritual in some instinctive way although I surrounded it with secrecy and would have felt shame if I had been discovered. During holidays in Devon I would sneak out of the window early in the morning and climb up onto the hills above the sea to lay sticks I had whittled in patterns on the ground. I don't know why I practised these rituals, and I don't think I knew then. It was just something I needed to do. I was also fascinated by the woman who appeared regularly on the opposite headland a little later, and moved in a ritual dance, flinging up her arms to the sky. The adults called her the mad woman, and I was warned against walking up there. In retrospect I expect she was a kindred spirit practising a yoga salute to the sun.

Also as a child I had an intuitive understanding of the deep connection between my body and the moon, which as an adult I find hard to grasp. At one (intuitive) level I know it, at another (logical) level I can't "get my head around it". At twelve years old I was obsessed by the moon, and wrote endless descriptions of moonlit skylscapes, particularly when the moon was full. Now I reflect that this was just before the menarche.

Pinkola Estés refers to the wildish intuitive powers of women which "*become as buried streams within women, buried by disrepute and disuse*" (Pinkola Estés 1992 p.80) and which can again become *fully manifested* with exercise.

The exercise that I have undertaken to recover that knowing started with recognising and honouring those things in nature that have special meaning for me rather than treating them with shame. It was my earliest way of participating, and remains the simplest. I can gaze upon the sea and find healing; touch and talk to trees and find strength and grounding; and wonder at the mystery of the moon. These are powerful sources of energy, but lack the fiery quality of the energy I have uncovered in this chapter. Finding my fire is tied up with releasing the knowing, that I have previously hidden from myself, of what it is like to be a woman.

Writing these pages has helped me to make a bridge between my internal world and the external, the personal and the universal. The process of voicing my experience is important, both for me, for women, and for the universe. It is a critical part of my quest to take myself seriously, standing as it does in the middle ground between action and reflection. On the one hand it is the expression of my introspection and reflection, and on the other, a prelude to acting on the results of that reflection. It also brings the female perspective and female meanings to centre stage as having a valuable and valid message for the world. Part of that perspective which is as yet more difficult to voice, is the element of the sacred which also needs a more central and robust position in our everyday living and loving.

I am aware that this writing may leave the reader breathless or puzzled as to how the various themes interconnect. As yet I am unable to feel, let alone demonstrate, this coherently.

What I do deeply feel and know, is that there is a pattern and a coherence within me which appears to map to the patterns of myth and experience recounted by others. It is as if have been digging up interesting pieces of coloured clay in my garden, and collecting them carefully. They are decorative, but not very impressive. In my dreams, however, I see a treasure map of my garden which shows a beautiful mosaic waiting to be uncovered.

Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I set out the methods I have used, put these in the context of a more general methodology, and examine each individual method.

In conclusion I reflect on a number of more general methodological issues.

There have been no straight lines in the way I have come to my methodology. It has emerged organically, sometimes flowing, sometimes springing out of a sudden insight, sometimes responding to a sharp nudge from my supervisors. There has been a strong emphasis on personal process and personal history alongside, and as part of, recording my experience of facilitating groups.

Making the following list of things I have actually done in the search for understanding has been a difficult task, feeling almost destructive at times. For a list is a straight line and has tended to divorce me from the reality which has twisted and turned, spiralled and woven, and stopped and started in complex patterns. Really my methodology has consisted of living my life, but with a more structured and focused awareness. The list includes both structures I have used for channelling that awareness, methods employed specifically for research purposes, and work which has become both a source of data and a medium for generating questions, growing understanding, and exploring issues.

Methods

1. Invitation to dialogue which resulted in some 14 tape recorded interviews or dialogues with people who worked as facilitators in similar ways to me either in the field of personal growth, in industry or in the public sector. Second and third meetings with three of these, and ongoing informal exchange of ideas and experience with these three and a further two.
2. Three rather more ad hoc meetings, more and less successfully tape recorded, one with a technical lecturer and baseball coach, one with a teacher who had been doing some voluntary work with a group of prisoners, one with a friend who had started a massage group. These took place very early on and I have hardly drawn on them, mainly because of the poor recording quality.
3. Tape-recorded interviews with seven people who took part in a course I facilitated; some written feedback and ideas from two more; a long letter and self-recorded tape sent from a tenth; plus spontaneous correspondence and miscellaneous letters from others.

All the interviews referred to in 1-3 were tape-recorded and transcribed, about half by me and the rest by my secretary.

4. Journal keeping. I started this at the beginning of 1988 and have continued more or less consistently ever since into 25 volumes.
5. Facilitating management development courses. This represents about 450 days over the research years. About three quarters of this work took place in one large multi-national company; and the rest was distributed between colleges of higher and further education, local authorities, and small companies and associations.
6. Mutual peer supervision or discussion about research issues both with the Research Group at Bath and with my friend and colleague Sara.
7. Co-counselling to explore and resolve emotional issues in my life generally.
8. Psychodrama to examine stuckness in the research process.
9. Attention to dreams.
10. Meditation and visualisation.
11. Ritual associated with the ancient goddess religion and the teachings of the North American Indian medicine wheel.
12. Tarot reading.
13. Drawing the research to examine stuckness and identify progress.
14. Reading, and initially, abstaining from reading
15. Writing reflectively, often triggered by reviewing journals.

I want to take each of these methods in turn, describe the process of what I did in each, followed by a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the methods as I see them. Before I do that I will set some context with some general reflections on what overall methodology I was using.

Methodology

Of the many approaches to human inquiry (Reason & Rowan 1981; Reason 1988, 1994), my work has developed in a way that is closest to action inquiry (Torbert 1981a, 1987, 1991) although not in a "pure" form.

Co-operative inquiry might have been an obvious choice of methodology, given the original research question (how do you deal with emergent distress in a group whose purpose is not

therapeutic). I rejected it mainly because I did not feel competent to run such an inquiry. This is not surprising since my *personal* research question centred around developing my competence as a facilitator and the ability to stay centred in difficult situations. In retrospect I see the advantage of that approach in that it would have mirrored the problem: as we inquired into our experience outside the group, so we would have experienced the emergence of distress within the group; in addition, interesting tensions would probably have arisen between those who wanted to focus on the original task and those who preferred to focus on current group process. I would find that a challenging prospect now, but at the time it was too daunting to consider.

Action or living inquiry, as developed by Torbert from the action science of Argyris and Schön, includes the inquirer in the field of observation and aims to develop the practitioner's attention at the point of action requiring:

an attention that includes simultaneously what one is focusing on in the outside world, one's own perception and actions, the conceptual-emotional-political patterns at play in the present situation (including memories of the past and projections into the future), and the movements of attention itself.

Torbert 1981b p. 187

This focused directly on my concern to reduce or eliminate the time lapse between my noticing of a problem and my ability to respond appropriately to it. Reading an early paper is what drew me to this methodology.

... collaborative inquiry spans four different 'territories' of human reality ...: (1) the outside world; (2) one's own behaviour; (3) one's own and other's thinking and feeling; and (4) the dynamics of human attention as it gains, loses, or changes focus and as it narrows or widens the number of qualities of which it is aware.

Torbert 1981a p.441

and:

The prospective action scientist, ... wishes to encourage a culture in which participants can study themselves while in action, recognizing their own behaviour, thought, and attentional dynamics as they occur, and also correcting incongruities as they occur.

Torbert 1981a p.442

These ideas are later developed further:

The vision of action inquiry is an attention that spans and integrates the four territories of human experience. This attention is what sees, embraces, and corrects incongruities among mission,

strategy, operations, and outcomes. It is the source of the "true sanity of natural awareness of the whole."

Torbert 1991 p. 219

Reading Robert Krim's account of his action inquiry research (Krim 1988) I was confronted not only by the intensity and thoroughness of his work, which is so different from my own, but also by the nausea I experienced on reading it. I have experienced similar sensations while doing a tai chi exercise at a research conference; and while writing up particularly difficult encounters in my journal. It seems that the sort of mindfulness required to study self *at the point of action*, and particularly to attend to the territory of own and other's feeling alongside behaviour, produces indigestion. There is an unaccustomed overload of practical, emotional and intellectual activity that is both confronting in its content, and difficult to co-ordinate in its process. Tai chi is a training which Torbert suggests as a way of cultivating *direct, moment-to-moment sensual awareness*, and it is also something I have nearly taken up and avoided on several occasions. All of which amount to some strong messages about approach-avoidance, and indicate ways of developing and intensifying my practice in the future.

Part of my nausea is about the discomfort of facing feelings and motivations I would rather slide past, and I am reminded of Torbert's comment: *"Every slothful molecule in us resists the effort ..."* (Torbert 1987). Much of my discomfort, however, is indigestion caused by Krim's constant activity, and resembles the discomfort I suffer if I do not have enough solitude. I am reminded of a statement of Torbert's with which I take issue that *"To be lost in thought, ... is not to be engaged in living inquiry"* (Torbert 1981b). For me there are not enough spaces in Torbert's scheme. I need to escape the noise and action into stillness. This does not make me less alive or less inquiring, and it improves the quality of my attention to the moment.

This theme recurred in discussion with my friend and colleague, Sara, who referred to Torbert saying that life consisted of three things: Loving, Working, and Inquiry. I argued that that was not the whole story, needing to add something which might be called Emptying, Being, Gazing. I could argue that that is part of Inquiry (for it certainly is), but it is also a fundamental need that I have, and if it were subsumed into Inquiry it would no longer meet that need because it would become a means to an end. And the very essence of this activity is that it is an end in itself.

Before I recognised my right to my own system of inquiry, it seemed so diffuse as to be no system at all in comparison with the tight framework and intense daily discipline of Krim's work. At a time when I was impatient with experiencing the research as *"sodding bitty bits"* it took Sara to see the pattern in my process of exploring current concerns of menstruation, men, and spirituality which repeated and was systematic. She referred to

1. the noticing of detail in my own process
2. following it up and pushing it beyond the comfortable or easy, rather than letting it go
3. giving constant attention to the questions "How/Why do I do that?"

The system Sara noticed is not one I could have planned to follow from the start, but one which emerges constantly from the exploration itself. It is a system without rules, and this is of particular importance. The system aims to achieve flexible alertness and attention to issues rather than to make an exhaustive record.

Back at the end of 1989 I was struggling with the idea of an inner and an outer methodology I call Root and Branch involving:

two distinct threads — one the Facts of what I am doing, who I am talking to, key themes etc. The other is what I have called Root and Branch, and concerns the inner dialogue/exploration which goes in parallel.

... what I'm missing is the account of the process of that inner dialogue. The process is what could be useful. Like: this is how I tune this instrument that I do my work with; this is how I connect with my power; and this is how Susi does it. Not just what do we do in the classroom.

They both explore inner dialogue. Root is digging down into the past; Branch is reaching up into the future, into the light. It is important to have both: Root without Branch becomes never-ending, self-indulgent and self-defeating introspection; Branch without Root becomes idealistic pie-in-the sky, out of touch, not practical and grounded.

Journal 14th November 1989

This entry gives a clue to how my research methods parallel professional competence methods, and how I tend to confuse the two. I slip into considering "how I tune this instrument" as distinct from analysing how I know what I know. In practice this is a mutually illuminating and synergistic intertwining, but in the sense-making stage it is confusing.

At this stage I was very unsure about revealing the inner methodology:

I suppose I am saying I have to include an account of the inner methodology as well as the "proper research" methodology which concerns the action and the facts and the outer experience.

But even that isn't necessarily enough. It really is the root reason why I am doing all this. But how do I make that connection speak? I hear people saying what's this got to do with anything? Why the images and metaphors? I guess the answer to that is, that if it really is key and I have the skill, then it will make sense. And what I can't make work, will have to go, ...

There is a tremendous tension around revealing that inner methodology.

- 1. It feels very private.*
- 2. If I reveal it, I may lose credibility, and no-one will heed anything else I say.*
- 3. If I don't reveal it, those sort of values and perspectives will not gain in credibility.*
- 4. To do it I have to believe that I have enough personal credibility to carry it.*
- 5. If I don't do it well and carry it off, then I make things worse, and set the case for such alternative approaches back ten years.*

So. I have these two strands and the need to inter-relate them – one explains the other.

Except I'm not sure which way round that goes – the inner will illuminate the outer, but the inner may well not make sense/seem relevant on its own, or until the outer parallels put it into context. ... the two threads mirror each other – the pattern of the inner is acted out in the experience of the outer.

Journal 14th November 1989

The mirroring of these threads, how inner work affects practice, is clear to see in my journals, themselves a way of partially externalising inner work, as well as of inwardly digesting outer work. The mirroring is not so clear in most of the interviews which took place early in the research process.

The Methods in Detail

Interviews and Dialogues, formal and informal

The process

I formally collected data from 24 people in all. Most of these people responded to a total of 29 invitations to dialogue sent out. A further eight people accepted but were unable to find mutually acceptable times. Only one person refused, and another had moved and could not be traced. Ten of the twenty four had a background in humanistic psychology, all but two being co-counsellors. Of those twenty-four I have had ongoing contact both formal (and recorded) and informal (and unrecorded) with five.

Fourteen of the twenty four were facilitators of groups, although three had only just started out in a tentative way, one lecturing in a technical subject. The remaining ten were people who attended my courses.

The sessions varied between being interviews and true dialogues. The structure was open in that I would state my areas of interests and invite their reflections without posing specific

questions. Sometimes a discussion would develop, at other times I was in listening mode. With those people I met with later I would raise issues that had been discussed in previous interviews, but similar issues tended to be raised across dialogues spontaneously anyway.

Issues of concern

Ironically the interviews are the area I am least happy with. Only a few sessions developed into real dialogue when we both became engaged to the point of forgetting about the tape recorder and where I contributed fully.

Informal sessions with no tape recorder in sight tended to be richer because of their spontaneity. This was particularly true of the people who had been members of groups I facilitated. An informal conversation over lunch often led to them volunteering to become involved in the research, but the subsequent taped conversations were disappointing, and our original engagement and enthusiasm seemed to evaporate. I think this was because they were unsure of what was required, unfamiliar with the issues involved, and looked to me to “lead an interview” more than I was willing to do. In my reluctance to be controlling, and because I did not want to feed them my ideas, I think I did not structure these interviews enough, and was not sufficiently explicit about my purpose. One purpose was to have feedback about how I operated in the group, but this felt too much like “fishing for compliments”. Both my reluctance and their confusion might have been helped by giving them some specific dimensions of facilitator behaviour, and group process to consider. As it was, uncertainty and nervousness often prevented either of us from letting go into the participative Imaginal and Feeling modes necessary for story-telling, and we operated a lot of the time in Practical mode.

Another issue may have been the habit of what fellow researcher Barbara Quin calls “*Therapist silence*” (Quin thesis in progress 1995), an injunction to be silent both inside (contract) and outside (confidentiality) sessions, which I bring with me from the roles of both social worker and facilitator. This would have inhibited me from either making my own comments or introducing material from dialogues with others.

My intention to have second interviews particularly with other facilitators, where I probed deeper into issues raised on the first occasion, did not often materialise, either because the people involved did not have time, or the interest to warrant a further claim on their time, or because I became overwhelmed with the data I already had.

With hindsight I felt that the interviews took place too early, and that it was only some years into the research that I really began to understand what the questions were. I feared that, when I returned to the transcripts, I would find the data from them irrelevant to the issues I

had gone on to explore. A brief glance at some transcripts re-inforced this until I discovered such a level of significant errors in the transcription that long passages seem trivial and meaningless. This re-inforced an old conviction that I had been tempted by pressure of work into discarding – that tapes should be transcribed by the researcher if at all possible.

On closer inspection, having listened again to the tapes and made corrections, I found a lot of rich and relevant data. However, I had concerns that, when I contacted these people to show them how I had included their material, it would be difficult for them to recall the context, because they had taken place so long ago. It would therefore be difficult for them to comment on any modifications they might want. I did not want this to appear to be a way of seeming to collaborate which simply went through the motions. However, when I did contact people enclosing the relevant extracts for inclusion in the thesis and seeking their agreement and comments, I met with interest and enthusiasm, and in several cases received further reflections and written passages from them in response.

Journalling

Long ago the word alone was treated as two words, all one. To be all one meant to be wholly one, ... That is precisely the goal of solitude, to be all one.

... Solitude is not an absence of energy or action, ... In ancient times purposeful solitude was both palliative and preventive. It was also used as an oracle, as a way of listening to the inner self to solicit advice and guidance otherwise impossible to hear in the din of daily life.

Estés 1992 p.293

The process

My journal is the key tool of all my exploring, and was started with the explicit intention of exploring the idea of action inquiry. It represents the reflective stages of innumerable iterations of an action-reflection research cycle and includes accounts of my experience facilitating groups, dreams, co-counselling sessions, meditation and similar experiences, sessions in the Bath Research Group and reflections about relationships with friends, partner, and family. In short just about everything that happens in my life may find a place there.

But it is more than just a record or a place for reflection, important as those are. It is the place where most of the data is created unless I write from memory of an event. The point at which I decide how to express something on that page is the point of crystallisation of something, until then, quite fluid.

My journal also served as alter ego, in that I was able to admit things in the journal that I was not yet ready to own. I noticed this after Judi pointed out that I often referred to the journal in

the third person ("a journal entry refers to ..." rather than "I wrote in my journal ..."), and found that it was not a trivial matter to rephrase those comments, but caused me some discomfort. I now recognise this as a creative way of allowing tentative aspirations and parts of my self to emerge and exist: a transitional space for getting to know and grow ideas for later transplanting.

I have five principles I follow in journal writing: four are permissions and one is a rule.

The **permissions** are:

- I can include anything and everything about my life
- I don't have to include anything
- I don't have to do it regularly at all
- I allow myself to buy aesthetically pleasing books to write in and don't write in books I don't like.

The **rule** is:

- Write on the right side of the page only, leaving room on the left for the reflections and connections which often bubble up as I write, or when I review entries later.

The permissions

It is difficult to admit to the extent of permission I gave myself, especially compared with the lack of systematic rules. However, I am convinced that this was the only way to allow an uncensored outpouring, and the only way to motivate myself to do it at all. I took the same approach as to a co-counselling session and started with what was on top of my mind. Sara decided to start a journal herself, and commented that she did not know what to include. I suggested "everything" and some time later she reported that she couldn't start, didn't know what to write. I suggested she wrote about that and, like me, she found this effective.

The disadvantage of including everything in an unstructured way is that it makes the journals difficult to analyse, and I have to sift through trivia, and personal commentary that is often painful. However, if it hadn't been for this, one dimension of validity or authenticity, that of "consistency in different areas of my life" would not have emerged. I began to see echoes and reflections of patterns in personal as well as professional relationships.

Being free to include everything was no guarantee that key incidents were recorded. There are missing accounts that are frustrating where I would be glad to find a checklist ticked

rather than nothing. I have often wondered whether I should have used a set of questions as a checklist to cover incidents I was describing (even simply Who? What? Why? How? Where? and When? and Thoughts, Feelings, Images, Sensations) to cater for busy times or occasions that were too painful to write fully about. The danger of that is that I might have substituted the checklist more regularly and lost the richness of some more wandering accounts. Also the fact that some things were too difficult to record is data significant for its absence.

Maybe a checklist applied *after* the writing of an account would fill in some gaps on important dimensions, but again the danger remains of using it as a short cut. The more I analysed and wrote up experience, the more aware I became of the sort of recording I needed, so the best guarantee of good quality data is to start the writing up process earlier rather than later.

The permission not to do it at all has on the whole worked in that it has never become a duty that I performed in a perfunctory way. The intervals in recording are not regular but neither are they often very long. Either guilt or panic at missing something important drove me to make time, as well as the comfort and usefulness of using the journal as a refuge and a way of finding out what I needed and how I felt.

I have never lost the child-like pleasure of putting pen to paper in a brand new book and have been vindicated in buying good quality hardback notebooks, for the one or two spiral bound exercise books I used have not lasted well. I have also experimented with ruled and unruled paper, would prefer alternate facing pages, but have not found this. Lines make entries tidier and easier to read, but without lines it is more apparent when I am *feeling* tidy or messy.

The one rule of leaving one side of the page blank has been a good one. Often after recording an event I recall significant cameos that I can then add as impressions on the opposite page. When I review the journals there is a space for comments which is the first pass at data analysis. For most of the research years I reviewed the journals regularly, writing a monthly summary of key events on this facing page (in red ink so that I could find them easily by flipping the pages) and cataloguing them under key words. This was useful in finding my way around in the journals, but I notice I was selective in writing the reviews according to my interests at the time. Now if I am writing about a key area I trawl right through all the journals noting references, a time consuming activity which nevertheless pays off.

I would not change my method of journalling, except maybe to give it more priority and space in my life. I have no doubt of its usefulness to my own personal and professional development in the context of which it has taken on a life of its own. I believe, not only that

the all inclusive, unstructured style allowed this to develop, but that a more systematic approach would have prevented it.

Facilitating Courses

All the courses I have been involved with include a dimension of whole person development even when the title suggests that they only involve skills training. This has been unexpected and occasionally unwelcome to some people, but almost all, including those who experienced initial difficulty, have found that this was not only generally helpful in their lives and work, but also enabled them to use the skills and make them their own more effectively.

The courses included a part technical course involving interviewing skills and the management of qualitative data; personal awareness; assertiveness; presentation skills; time management; information gathering; team building and conflict resolution; customer care; motivation; conducting appraisals; and stress management.

The people who have participated in these courses have been young professionals, first time managers, senior managers, senior partners, company directors, caretakers, technicians, supervisors, team leaders, secretaries, administrative assistants, divisional managers, and men and women returning to work after years of unemployment and/or child care. They have come from the computer industry, education, social work, manufacturing, sales, insurance companies, and accountancy firms. There has also been a rich mix of cultures and languages both in this country and abroad.

Peer Supervision

Peer supervision sessions in the Research Group at Bath have been a rich ground both for testing my ideas and being triggered by the work of others. The Bath Research Group has offered a high quality of both support and challenge, together with a rich diversity of ways of working. As the group became smaller, its members having been together for many years, it could have become stagnant or collusive, but this has been far from the case. I attribute this partly to the high degree of openness, sharing, and commitment of all its members as we all have struggled with considerable life crises alongside our research; partly to the unswerving and challenging attention of Judi and Peter to the quality and spirit of the inquiry process. They have pursued this with "unbending intent" (Brew 1988), dispensing the medicine of loving confrontation, neither colluding, nor destroying the safety of the group. At the same time, although in a special role, they have always remained fully part of the group, which to me has been an important part of its effectiveness as a safe place to explore and learn.

The practice of tape-recording major discussion sessions for each individual concerned has also been invaluable especially to a reflective learner like me, as I have been able to make sense of sessions on the way home in the car, and have also had a record to refer to later.

Discussion sessions with Sara were more informal, less frequent, and less structured, and, in the beginning, offered an opportunity to test ideas outside the Bath culture with someone who was new to ideas of human inquiry and new paradigm research. Sara's analytical, "head" approach complemented my more intuitive view of the world and we found these different perspectives of great mutual benefit.

The methods discussed so far were primarily undertaken for the sake of research, and yielded opportunities for personal and professional development. Those I am about to examine are processes I have used primarily for personal and professional development purposes, but which also gave me important insights into the research. For this reason I was for a long time confused between professional and research methodology, until I realised that this was not so much a question of my confusion as of their essential interconnectedness.

Co-counselling

Co-counselling has been my primary personal development tool for the past twelve years, and for the last ten years I have also been a teacher of this method. Through co-counselling I have used Gestalt techniques, a modified form of psychodrama, meditation, guided fantasy, body work and primal regression processes, as well as classic cathartic and re-evaluation processes.

What co-counselling teaches which has been of particular value is the practice of freeing a part of one's attention from what may be a very intense engagement in a cathartic process, so that there is always a balancing, observing function alongside the emotional discharge. In the co-counselling context this provides a safe Adult anchor in present reality for the Child who may be working intensely on past distress. In the research context this habit transfers very readily to the fly-on-the-wall attention which is such a necessary skill in the process of action inquiry.

However, it is one thing to achieve such balance of attention over (most of) the relatively private, personal and limited time span of a co-counselling session; it is quite another to cultivate it constantly. This goes beyond the cycling of action and reflection as practised in co-operative inquiry, and demands a *"consciousness in which action and reflection interpenetrate"* (Reason 1994 p. 50). To be deeply engaged *and* standing back to reflect, *and* simultaneously in action in the world is challenging indeed.

Torbert (1991) explores four prime sources of the necessary inadequacies of our attention that prevent us attending effectively to the four territories (mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes). He concludes that the only certainty is the inadequacy of our knowledge of what is occurring, and that even in the rare moments when we succeed in widening our attention to all four territories, we will be confronted with *"the limited penetration of our attention against the vast and obscure background of our ignorance."*

Psychodrama

The opportunity for formal psychodrama has come from the Bath Research Group itself in which Barbara Quin is a qualified practitioner and has led some sessions for us. I vividly remember the psychodrama I did in that group which shifted me from a stuck position into being able to begin to write.

Dreams

The inclusion of dreams in my journals was a happening rather than a decision, and was quite a leap in the dark. I used to be fascinated by my dreams, but dismissive of their "usefulness". Logging them regularly has shown me a coherence in the dream messages I receive that has given me a different perspective. However, this realisation was slow in coming and I regret that I only briefly linked this data to moon phases and my menstrual cycle.

Meditation and Visualisation

While dreams have given me a way of exploring a neglected transpersonal dimension, both meditation and visualisation have been important primarily in connecting me with messages from my own body, another neglected source of information. Using chakra meditation I have been able to explore my own internal state and judge what I needed to do to redress imbalances, often using colour visualisation. I have begun to extend this to tuning in to other people and want to explore this further in future. I tend to use meditation regularly over several months at a time, and then to "forget" it for a periods of months before returning to regular practice.

Visualisation includes such activities as visualising colour in different parts of the body, taking part in fantasies guided by other people, and dialoguing with parts of the body that were in pain or tension. This has not been such a regularly or frequently used tool.

I have been helped in this by the diagnoses and images used by my acupuncturist to describe different manifestations of body energy during regular visits to her over several years.

Ritual

Exploring new forms of ritual based on the ancient goddess and native American traditions through a number of experiential workshops and some reading has been part of bringing spiritual practice into my life. It has been a tentative process due to my own ambivalence, and the haphazard availability of time and money to attend workshops. I feel some regret and almost shame at my undisciplined and piecemeal approach because I feel it does not honour the traditions themselves. On the other hand I notice that although my practice may be irregular, it is persistent, and it has given me a consistent and acceptable way of thinking and feeling about spiritual matters.

Tarot

Using tarot cards is linked for me with a spiritual initiation with connections to the earth, the ancient goddess religion, and pagan sites which took place in Cornwall a few years ago. It is another opportunity for me to tune in to messages which otherwise go unheard in the busyness of everyday life. Although I tend to focus a reading on a question, I do not use it for predicting future outcomes, but for diagnosing what is happening on a number of levels in the present. It is significant that I use the Motherpeace deck which is a feminist system and has a more visually obvious connection to the natural elements of the suits through the images and colours than traditional decks I have seen.

What has surprised me in using the cards is the consistency of messages they have given leading up to significant life changing events, followed by a complete shift of emphasis after that event has passed. I find it difficult to understand and accept whatever process is at work here, but cannot ignore the impact of particular combinations of cards reappearing with striking consistency.

I have also explored the use of astrology, the I Ching, and runes for a similar purpose but have not pursued these or used them regularly as I have the tarot.

Drawing

From the beginning of the research I have used drawing as a process of exploring progress. The drawings of the research show a progression over time from abstract doodles (1988) which are vague, black and white, and formless, through a series of confused, complex and colourful shapes and images, to a very clear tree diagram (1993) which became my working structure for writing up, and which also led to a linear written table (late 1994) showing chapter titles, content and literature sources.

At first drawing seemed an aimless activity which made me feel I was “doing” something when, in conventional academic terms, I was not. Only when seen in sequence together do the drawings illustrate a developing process. Drawing was also a very useful way of shifting writer’s block.

Reading

As described in Chapter 5 *Ways of Knowing* at first it was important to me not to read in order to allow my own inner understanding to emerge. There then came a time when I was eager to read and excited to find confirmation and extension of my ideas in the work of other people.

Writing

I seriously underestimated writing as a method of inquiry in its own right, rather than as a means of communicating the results. This was not for lack of being told that this was the case, or of being encouraged to attend writing workshops organised by Peter and Judi. I simply did not hear, and stubbornly believed that the workshops were for those writing up in spite of evidence to the contrary, and now have the nerve to be surprised at the *experience* of how understanding, connections and new ideas emerge as I write.

Struck me in the early hours this morning how very much writing is sense-making and part of the research for me. On the one hand I know that this is not a new discovery, but on the other I notice that I, for one, associate writing with the final stage, writing up. And I want to say to P & J, why didn't you say so? Of course all their encouragement to write and anxiety when we don't is about this, but it never came home to me before how much the writing is the research, particularly when it comes to personal process.

... Like a sewage treatment plant, lots of very divergent material goes in, and you set it all stewing away, and hope something clear comes out the other end.

Journal 2nd July 1993

Experimenting with different ways of writing was part of the process of allowing myself a less “academic” style. Most experiments originated in the need to get over a writing block. To this end I have written in different rooms in the house; outside in the garden; in hired cottages and borrowed houses; overlooking the sea or hills; on my own and with company. I have tried writing by hand, using coloured paper, and even writing in a spiral starting in the centre of the page, or slantwise across the paper, telling it slant? (Olsen 1978 p. 44). A favourite approach combines visualisation, drawing and writing which is how I started the Menstruation chapter:

This seems a good theme for trying out some flow of consciousness writing, seeing what will bubble up from the swamp.

To start the experiment, I pull out a piece of paper from the scatter on the table, a drawing dated 9th November 1990 representing a visualization from a day in the Research Group.

Writings 20th March 1992

I then described the picture and flowed on to write sixteen pages.

Other Methodological Issues

Having examined individual methods in detail, I will now include some connected issues which have emerged.

Attention and Intention

Since this collection of methods was not set out purposefully at the start as the components of a methodology, there has been a need of an independent over-riding or underpinning principle to capture it all until a retrospective review was able to connect it together. This net has been an inquiring and noticing attention most evident in the journals, and much helped by the habit of co-counselling referred to above, as well as the nudging of perceptive friends both inside and outside the Bath Research Group.

I have swung from being delighted and excited by this and the interconnections it highlighted, to being irked at being so constantly aware and being tempted to sink into an unconsidered, unquestioning apathy.

Finally I want to mention what appears to be a spin-off from the journaling methodology. It is a phenomenon that I have begun to notice that has links with affirmations.

Affirmations are present tense statements describing a desired outcome in life as if it had already happened. They can be used as a technique for effecting personal change (Hay 1988). I was sceptical of this as a useful method, and was therefore surprised at the apparent power of this practice to make things happen in my life in a seemingly mysterious way. The theory behind this is that the making of a strongly positive statement, framed in the present continuous tense, and the conscious repeating of it, sets up cognitive dissonance. That is, the brain notices a discrepancy between the present tense statement and the true current state of affairs and therefore sets to work to narrow that gap and thus to create a situation in which the statement is true. I can understand how this process would work on matters relating to my own behaviour or state of mind, but it does not account for the apparent effect of affirmations on external factors.

In the context of journaling, if I notice a problem and write about it, this seems to set in motion some process whereby the problem begins to solve itself. So that the next time I encounter something similar I can handle it without the difficulty I had previously. Maybe this is the effect of cultivating attention in the process of action inquiry, but it happens without my attention being "properly" engaged in action, either during the past event which I have recorded, or during the subsequent successful encounter, but only retrospectively in reflection.

Is it possible that these phenomena are evidence of consciousness in action working at an unconscious level? Or is that a contradiction in terms? Can the practice of affirmations that "put out to the universe" one's needs and aspirations be seen simply as an extension of Torbert's territories to include a transpersonal dimension? For if I accept the existence of such a transpersonal or spiritual dimension, then it certainly needs inclusion in the span of my attention. The attention simply needs to widen in a very particular way to include it, *"through spiritual work which helps develop a sense of connection with our presence in the world beyond the limitations of a 'skin-encapsulated ego'"* (Reason 1994). This sort of attention has been practised for centuries through meditation. It is with some discomfort that I notice that what I have called an "affirmation" is a close relation of prayer, given a popular new age label.

Signposting

A major piece of learning for me has been recognizing the need to guide the reader through the writing. Relationships with those close to me have often suffered from my "conversations in my head" which never reach the outside world, but which I assume others know about. Similarly in my writing I tend to be too cryptic, and not to give sufficient introductory framing to new directions. The tendency to too condensed a style has been increased by fears, on the one hand of being self-indulgent in the inclusion of personal material, and on the other hand of the overall thesis being too long.

Issues of Inclusion and Exclusion

The extent of my involvement in personal process and exploration of personal history has given me many dilemmas about what to include in this thesis and how. At first my limited conception of what could be included in an academic thesis made it unthinkable to me that much of the personal material could be included. My problem there was in reconciling the fact that a method of inquiry seemed legitimate and fruitful and yielded relevant data, but that it had to be left out. Simply stating that a co-counselling session was useful without including some content to demonstrate how, seemed about as helpful as telling someone who has never left the tropics that playing snowballs is fun.

As time went on my idea of what I could include expanded radically, probably to an unreasonable extreme in the other direction. When I first made important links with early history I felt a great need to include it all, but worried about the embarrassment this would cause both me and others, and the potential this had for damaging relationships and hurting people I no longer had any wish to blame or attack.

Since then I sense that the situation has changed. As I write I am coming close to reviewing all that I have written and pulling it together to form the first finished draft of the thesis. I expect to find that I am no longer attached to the degree of disclosure I contemplated earlier, but will be able to select what seems essential to demonstrating processes of development. It may also be possible to present personal material in a less "head-on" way, framing my account as a story seen from one perspective rather than a "truth".

Beyond managing what is included and how, I also have the opportunity to negotiate with relevant people, and to do some careful framing and scene-setting about how they approach the reading of it. There is a great deal of anxiety around this and a temptation to pretend that the document was never finished rather than initiate such a conversation. Nevertheless, this strategy is also congruent with what the research has brought me to believe about the value of taking personal risks in both professional and personal relationships.

Things I did not do

A weekend of storytelling or cognitive maps

In retrospect I regret not carrying to fulfilment an idea I had for convening a weekend or day with a small group of these people to allow an interaction of their ideas. One method which would have avoided the constraints of the dialogues consisted of convening a storytelling group and inviting people to tell their story, possibly around some of the emergent themes. Another idea was to present my analysis of their transcripts in a gallery of cognitive maps, and use that as a starting point for discussion. That plan fell victim to the sort of evaporation of personal power I discuss in a later chapter which allowed me to lose the courage of my convictions. However, I still value it as a rich possibility for future professional development, but outside the scope of this thesis at this stage.

Audio or video-taping myself in action

This was suggested to me and would in theory have been easy enough to achieve logistically. My resistance was partly due to my dislike of being recorded particularly on video, but also partly because of the difficulty of negotiating this with groups and organisations, and the possible effect of the camera on what went on. I readily accept that this would have been a rich, if confronting, source of data, but since the organisation where it

would have been logistically possible to set up has a policy of “no research”, I was relieved to be able to shelve it.

Chapter 8

Issues of Validity – an Exploration

This chapter starts by considering what validity is, and what validity criteria apply to the sort of thesis I am writing, with attention to criteria used by others. I address validity both within and across different types of knowledge.

Early questions I asked about validity were set in the context of the “Root and Branch” methodology referred to in Chapter 7. In this tree metaphor “Root”, or intra-personal exploration, grounds, informs, and is balanced by “Branch” activity which involves practice in the world.

I recognised the existence of corresponding inner and outer processes of validity:

Just as there is inner and outer methodology, there is inner and outer validity.

Test Question for inner validity: — does it feel right?

Test Question for outer validity: — does it make a difference?

And out of that creative tension between the inner and outer experience and methodology comes the validity ... ah! but the validity of what — the practice or the research method? The practice I think, which is what I care about, because it is useful, it makes a difference. But doesn't the research make a difference, isn't that what I aim at? And isn't the practice research anyway? ... of course it is. That's fine and good, but where does it leave validity?

Journal 14th November 1989

In a further investigation into this question two years later I was still pursuing the distinction between inner and outer validity. In order to establish **inner or root validity** which is concerned with experiential knowledge, I asked the question “does it feel right?”, looking for:

1. authenticity
2. energy
3. groundedness
4. consistency, coherence, and congruence across time and areas of living

To explore **outer or branch validity**, which is concerned with practical knowledge and outcomes, I inquire whether it “makes a difference”, asking the questions:

1. Is it consistent across methods? (this combines with 4 above)
2. Can I demonstrate both the roots and the relevance to other people and the world in a way that is credible and robust enough to survive discussion, challenge, and derision outside the Bath Research Group?

3. Does it honour the confidentiality and humanity of other people?

To me all of the above requirements seem to be self-evidently fulfilled in the thesis. But how do I convince you, the reader, that this is so? And how can I be sure that I am not deceiving myself? What is validity? Do I have it? Can I demonstrate it? A journal entry shows these questions surfacing.

I feel a need to move at least temporarily away from inner reflective writing, towards some kind of reality check. I need to be sure I have practical, external evidence in addition to my intuitive conviction that what I am doing has validity for people out there in organizations. There are two issues here. One is whether my writing about my dreams, inner symbolism, and psychological processes is relevant to their lives. The other is whether I can demonstrate that relevance. If the exploration is irrelevant then it remains a valuable piece of personal process for me, but no more. It makes no contribution ... If it is relevant but I can't demonstrate the relevance, then the world may gain an indirect benefit from my improved effectiveness as a facilitator, but cannot learn from, and build on that experience if we can't talk about it. Maybe I wouldn't know whether or not it was relevant unless I could demonstrate it. Or rather, I only discover whether it is relevant to others by demonstrating its relevance to me.

Journal 15th May 1992

It is already apparent from these reflections that the concept of validity is affected by the sort of research I have been doing. The question is how do the differences in post-positivist research affect the notion of validity?

In describing the post-positivist research paradigm, Reason (1988 pp. 10-14) identifies three dimensions of such difference in collaborative forms of inquiry. They are the movement away from knowledge which is distant, objective, and fragmented towards participatory and holistic knowledge; the related shift away from objective consciousness to the development of an awareness that Reason calls "*critical subjectivity*"; and the increasing quest for knowledge "*formed in and for action*" which aims to move away from over-analytical knowledge to "*a recovery of the muted feminine which is more intuitive and more grounded and practical.*"

In my most recent search for validity, however, when I started to write this chapter, I seemed to lose touch with my muted feminine, and reached for the dictionary in analytical mode. It is worth exploring why I did that. The mention of validity, with its positivist associations, brought the expectation of having to logically prove and justify knowledge that is not susceptible to such proof. Memory of past failure put me on the defensive, and I turned to the "givens" of the dictionary partly because I suddenly no longer trusted my own knowing, but partly out of an outdated habit of hiding and protecting how I really do know.

By contrast I would like an exploration of validity to be a surfacing of deeply held convictions about why I *do* trust my own knowing. As part of reframing the notion of validity in order to give myself permission to do that I searched for alternative words for validity. One much used in the Bath Research Group was rigour, and my reaction to Peter's parody of this word demonstrates some of my difficulty in getting to grips with this issue.

Peter put me off this by his way of referring to rigour – he deepened his voice, moved his whole torso forward into the word (shoulder to the wheel), sticking out his lips in order to enunciate rigorously: – it reminded me of military stiffness, public school ethos, parade grounds, and ... of shoulders twitching when I was seen slumping – the guardsman routine. The next association that came up was "rigor mortis", which didn't help much either. And "intellectual rigour", which has a nice ring about it, but reminds me of Latin in general and the mental discipline it was supposed to give me; and of Miss Warry in particular, and the discipline of terror she actually imposed.

Writings 3rd February 1989

More positively and metaphorically, to use an image that appears frequently in this thesis, rigour can be seen as the process of keeping the woven cloth straight, of keeping the tension between warp and weft; banging down the weft to keep the weave dense; and keeping the warp taut. Rigour is keeping weaving, weaving in and out. Otherwise each set of threads hangs loose and one set obscures the view of the other set, and there is no pattern.

Creating a pattern is part of rigour, but so is letting the pattern emerge or surface, and resisting the temptation to impose structure or force the pace; and rigour also involves making it clear that there isn't a pattern if that is the case.

Setting out to find an alternative word to rigour I rejected a number of words such as *discipline* and *methodical* because they were either imprecise or lacked energy. I finally arrived at "critical vigour" which had both sufficient energy to avoid being dry, and the two meanings of critical as both discerning, and necessary — to avoid a slide into self-deception or collusion. It echoes Reason's *critical subjectivity* mentioned above, which refers to the presence of the researcher as part of the research, so central to my work, and the need to include self-knowledge as an unavoidable and invaluable part of the inquiry. Reason points out the need to balance the naiveté and potential distortion of primary subjectivity by directing an insightful awareness and attention upon it, in a way that allows the possibility of transcending the alienating subject-object split (see Chapter 9).

Having made this exploration into meaning, I was happy enough to retain the umbrella term "validity" to convey the nature of the issues addressed in this chapter. Deciding the criteria of validity and where to apply them was now more important. The first three of my "inner, root",

criteria focus on experiential knowledge; while the fourth “inner” and all the “outer” criteria resonate across knowledge from all sources, with an emphasis on practical outcomes in the world. What is missing is separate attention to both presentational and propositional knowledge.

i now present Heron's (1992) analysis of the types of knowledge and their validity which fills these gaps and gives some context to these issues. In Heron's model, types of knowledge do not sit neatly within each layer of the up-hierarchy (see Review), but are an expression of the worlds that are created at the point of interaction between two adjacent modes, see diagram.

Parent Modes	World	Knowledge
Practical & Affective	Existence	Practical
Conceptual & Practical	Essence	Propositional
Imaginal & Conceptual	Appearance	Presentational
Affective & Imaginal	Presence	Experiential

Thus he proposes that where two modes meet and interact, a world is parented by those two modes: such that the affective and imaginal modes together create the world of presence, which yields

experiential knowing; the imaginal and conceptual modes give rise to the world of appearance, the home of presentational knowing; the conceptual and practical modes generate the world of essence where we find propositional knowing; and the practical mode comes full circle to meet the affective mode and produce the world of existence with its practical knowing. I will now explore each of these types of knowledge in terms of both my own criteria, and of Heron's model and canons of validity.

Experiential Knowledge

My own criteria of inner, experiential validity are 1. authenticity; 2. energy; 3. groundedness; and 4. a cluster around consistency, coherence and congruence. This last cluster belongs more appropriately in the separate section Resonance of Knowing.

Heron describes experiential knowledge as knowledge through participation in and resonance with other presences in the unified field of being, “*an exhilarating participation*” in which there is both awareness of distinct individuality and identification (as direct experience rather than idea) with the shared ground of being of everything in the universe.

He proposes a canon of “declarative proof” of such participation which is “*in the palate, on the pulse, in the embrace, in the gaze*”; and a complementary canon of qualitative coherence,

involving the coherence of immaterial qualia which are felt to be present although *not perceived*.

Before discussing declarative proof, I have to admit to being baffled by “immaterial qualia”. They cannot be the cues that tell me that a well designed suit or boat or vase “looks right”; or that alert me to a hidden worry in my friend. For I can perceive those, and even though I might not know quite how I have perceived them, when pushed I can identify the cut or the curve; a closedness of gaze, or other evidence of tension in my friend. Furthermore Heron argues that this apparent incongruence in a presence is down to incomplete participation, and will disappear if we commune more deeply, or “*become compresent*” with it. Maybe this qualitative coherence corresponds to my question “does it feel right?”

How indeed do I know that I have participated “properly” or fully? How can you the reader be convinced that my participation means anything, however indirectly, to you? That it was authentic? To turn to the **first of my criteria**, what makes participation **authentic**?

I used to think that authenticity depended on having well-documented evidence of what I had done, a factual record. Later I came to see that a more important aspect of it concerned the quality of attention given to that experience and to reflecting upon it. I was familiar with “authentic behaviour” meaning behaviour free of unthinking, conditioned responses stemming from out-of-date childhood patterns. For my research to be authentic, I needed to free my attention from old habits of thinking and question assumptions. In short I needed to be rigorous, applying the *critical subjectivity* described above to my experience and reflections.

Heron invokes declarative proof as evidence of participation using the saying that “*the proof of the pudding is in the eating*”. However, I am uneasy with this as a relatively superficial analogy. That simply means that the pudding tasted, and does not take account of how fully I engaged with that taste, or of the deeper or longer term effects of ingestion and nutrition. I suggest that the statement ‘I am what I eat’ reflects a more fundamental participatory relationship which affects my Being. In the context of this thesis, my attention to, and valuing of experiential knowing has indeed changed my way of being, both as it concerns my practice and my inner beliefs. So how, when, and with what have I participated to bring such a change about?

First I have participated with myself. For me, experiential knowledge also includes knowledge in and of the body. This may be interactive and part of participation, as in the taste of food on the tongue; or it may be independent, an awareness of internal body states. Body cycles and rhythms are important here, and bring me to my **second listed criterion of energy**. My knowing is closely bound to my energy cycles. When I ignore this rhythm I

become depressed at quiescent times for fear that I have “lost my faith”, or I can wear myself out in vain. If the energy to be outgoing or to be alert is not grounded in this rhythm, then it can be brittle, and lack credibility, and the quality of attention will be poor. I also lose opportunities for understanding. For instance at times of “low” or intuned energy I may have great heaviness in the morning and difficulty in waking up which is not just laziness but a body message. It may be a signal that my body needs the healing of sleep, or it may be that the dream world is pulling me back into it. When I heeded this today, instead of making myself get up and “get on with writing” in a prescriptive and driven way, I was rewarded with a very clear dream message about where to start writing and how.

All this has taught me to live more comfortably in my body and that understanding spreads out into other forms of knowing (see Resonance of Knowing below), such that I develop congruence across my being (experiential knowing), my self-presentation (accepting how I look or presentational knowing), my ability to form and articulate ideas (propositional knowing), and my behaviour (practical knowing). Is *this* Heron’s “*felt appropriateness*” or qualitative coherence?

Secondly I have participated with other people, both singly and in groups. The depth of that participation depends upon their willingness to engage, awarely or unawarely, in the process. When there is a correspondence of willingness between all members of a group including me as facilitator, the sharing and empathy taking place at a feeling level create a rich learning environment, both safe enough and stimulating enough for life-changing learning to take place. This has been my experience in many groups I have facilitated, most notably in the team building event described in Chapter 12.

A third form of participation that has been important to me is with nature. At a superficial level I can recharge my energy by being in an open space, in woods, by the sea. But at a deeper level I know that I have been sustained by talking to, listening to, and absorbing the energy of trees, sea, sky, and the earth in an ongoing communion and communication that has reconnected some very deep roots in me.

This brings me to a further dimension of participatory knowledge that is central to me, and which Heron neglects in this passage about validity, although he honours it fully elsewhere. This is the sense in which participation yields spiritual knowledge, and has allowed me, in the words of Allen Parrott (1990), to “honour the mystery”. This aspect of experiential knowledge is fully acknowledged by Reason (1988) in his description of *participatory and holistic knowing*.

another characteristic of a participatory world-view is that meaning and mystery are restored to human experience, so that the world is once again experienced as a sacred place.

Like Heron he recognizes the need to “rescue” our capacity for participation from the damage done by the subject-object split, to move away from separation and fragmentation in our perception of the world and toward identification, empathy, and responsibility. I did not expect the process of my inquiry to be healing, but it has been, because I have learned to participate and to reconnect with a world which in Heron’s words is “*normally buried, trampled underfoot*”.

I have been much persuaded ... that the purpose of human inquiry is not so much the search for truth but to heal, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience.

My research has been healing of many manifestations of that split: the discontinuity of identity, and the gap between image and self-image (see Chapter 9); the disjunction between body and mind (see Chapter 5); the loss of spirituality and my connection to the earth (see Chapter 4). An ongoing spin-off has been the healing of the relationship between me and my parents and our startlingly, but not surprisingly, different perceptions of the past; The greatest gift has been the sense of ongoing healing of all these rifts, and the rediscovery of my sense of the sacred. Growing experiential knowing has been the foundation of this healing which has also made its effects felt throughout at all levels of knowing. This relates to my fourth criterion or cluster of criteria around consistency, coherence and congruence which I will discuss separately under the heading of Resonance of Knowing below, because it seems to refer to all levels of knowledge.

My third criterion, groundedness, relates partly to the need for all knowing to be grounded in the Affective mode:

Within the metaphor of the up-hierarchy, this means that the validity of the transactions that constitute the world of presence will be a touchstone for the validity of all higher sets of transactions.

Groundedness also relates to the criteria of energy and authenticity. Energy needs to be grounded in the natural energy cycles of the body; and a part of authenticity is the need for all experience, including that of mystery, to be well-founded, documented, and capable of expression in accessible ways. This guards against charges of weird and fanciful fabrication, and has been of key importance to me in demonstrating the relevance of barely admissible experiential knowledge to the everyday world of business.

I conclude this section by revising my criteria. I look for experiential knowledge to be: 1. authentic; 2. in tune with natural rhythms; 3. grounded in experience; 4. honouring of the mystery.

Presentational Knowledge

At the point of expression, in the use of images or metaphor, experiential knowledge spills over into the neighbouring world of appearances. Presentational knowledge seems to me to be primarily about communication, and making other types of knowledge accessible, in particular propositional and experiential knowledge. As an example of the former I recall a course called "Painting with Numbers" developed by a colleague to make statistics meaningful to innumerate people. Experiential knowledge is peculiarly dependent on presentational knowledge without which it cannot be expressed or talked about. Indeed I cannot begin to make sense of experiential knowing for myself without using some intermediate form of presentational knowledge. Sometimes I may deliberately invoke a metaphor in order to surface body knowledge (see Chapter 5); sometimes the metaphor may appear spontaneously as in this morning's dream referred to above. Large parts of this thesis are an attempt to make experiential knowing accessible in this way through the use of metaphor.

Heron proposes a canon of "*rhythmic vitality*" for presentational knowledge to honour the rhythmic structure of life itself represented by a work of art. This has echoes of my criterion of energy in the context of experiential knowledge. I fully accept the need for such energy as a characteristic of imaginal representations. An integral part of a metaphor is that it matches the energy of whatever it seeks to represent (see the jack-in-the-box of Chapter 5). The extent to which I can convey this energy is maybe a measure of how fully I have participated, because my presentational understanding that allows me to be effective in the world of appearance is grounded in my experiential understanding of the world of presence.

I wonder whether rhythmic vitality or energy alone is enough to evoke and convey meaning. I feel the need of a supporting criterion that I have named "eloquence". Eloquence for me involves finding a medium that is accessible to an audience, attempting to start from where they are, speaking their language, and speaking it fluently. Part of the purpose of such eloquence is to convey a specific meaning at a point in time. Another purpose is to inspire more generally and to offer insight into participation, a glimpse of the web of connections behind the metaphor, an understanding of the experiential knowing that it expresses.

Heron goes on to examine a complementary canon for presentational knowledge concerning form. I am not concerned here with aesthetic theory, but remember how important framing and signposting have been in the quest to make the message of this thesis accessible to the

reader. In a very real sense the medium is the message, and presentational competence is incomplete or meaningless, however eloquent its content, without the ability to locate and draw attention to the message through relevant structuring.

Thus my criteria for presentational knowing are that it be: 1. energetically evocative; 2. eloquent; 3. appropriately framed.

Propositional Knowledge

Heron describes this knowledge as knowledge-about, arranged in a hierarchy of theories, laws and statements of fact. He distinguishes between traditional and post-linguistic propositional knowledge, demonstrating that the interpenetration of subject and object in the participatory world view undermines validity that relies on the evidence of facts. Instead he proposes a dialectical logic that supersedes the old logic of opposites and transcends the subject-object separation.

In the context of propositional knowledge I have experienced considerable approach-avoidance behaviour. On the one hand, as explained in Chapter 5, I have awarely and deliberately avoided a traditional and logical approach in this thesis. This was in order to leave behind the educational experience of the past that had blocked my intuitive style of thinking. On the other hand, however, having gained permission to “do it my way” I feared becoming unbalanced in the other direction. For I discovered a natural tendency to “leap-frog” the conceptual mode in my process of coming to know (see also Chapter 5), and therefore felt the need to weave in the conceptual strand to prove my competence and redress the balance.

This issue of balance is part of the question “how do I write a watery thesis?” or “when is a thesis not a thesis?” The solution needs to be sufficiently intuitive to represent wateriness, and sufficiently conceptually competent to be an academic thesis, that is, recognizable and accessible to an academic audience. Have I got that balance right? Have I pushed out the boundaries without leaving them out of sight? Have I gone too far, or not far enough?

As one way of measuring this balance I have looked to the last chapter of this thesis to see whether the messages or principles expressed there reflect a balance between the different ways of knowing. I was relieved to find that they do: the first two involve experiential knowledge of participation and body knowing; the next two are practical injunctions for being and communicating in the world; the next primarily concerns presentational knowledge; and the last is largely propositional and illustrates the dialectical logic that transcends opposites referred to by Heron above.

Another aspect of the tension between intuitive and logical ways of knowing has been the way in which they have tended to interfere with each other. For instance, my “common sense” knowledge of the world as separate from myself has inhibited me from the deeper intuitive knowledge of wholeness and connection. The *concept* of connection alone is not enough to outweigh the concept of separation, backed as it is by overwhelming practical, perceptual evidence. Only the *experience* of “dropping through” into participation (and overwhelming experiential evidence) has been sufficient to break that tension of doubt.

An example of the intuitive interfering with the logical has occurred in the structuring of thesis chapters. When “structured” intuitively, that is, as they were written, the themes frequently proved to be obscure to the reader. Again and again I found myself using a “sides-to-middle” technique to achieve a more logical and accessible structure. (“Sides-to-middle” was a technique applied to bed linen by my mother and no doubt countless other frugal housekeepers during the pre-sixties era to extend the life of well-worn sheets.) My intuitive process tends to spiral in to what is most important which accounts for the fact that I have most frequently needed to move the middle of a chapter to the front to make its theme explicit to the reader.

Propositional knowledge needs to be 1. capable of discerning and exploring difference; and 2. capable of transcending difference creatively.

Practical Knowledge

A basic premise of mine has always been that the doing of research should be validated by practicality, by the purpose of making a difference in the world.

Heron suggests that practical knowledge *“does not validate propositional knowledge, but morally justifies it”*, a sentiment that I would also apply to my extensive exploration of personal process and its inclusion in this thesis. Heron regards practical knowledge as the consummation of the up-hierarchy of knowledge, referring to the skills of practical knowledge as *“a blessed relief”*.

Heron proposes two canons of competence which he labels *“behavioural grip”* and *“execution”*. These cover the demonstration of both the “what” and the “how” of competence which I would combine under the heading effective competence.

Whatever the skill is, you need to be able to demonstrate that you can actually do it, over a significant time span, under all relevant conditions, and with an appropriate economy of means.

Heron 1992 p. 173

He further suggests the inclusion of elegance which seems to me more at home in the world of appearance. I would however add, or make explicit, a criteria that maybe Heron implies in his. This criterion is concerned with credibility, timing, and appropriateness; alertness to conditions, and adaptability, and is well short-handed by the slang word "nous". It does not preclude openness but avoids naiveté. I will call this appropriateness.

I had intended at this point to include my criteria of outer or "branch" validity, but because these all hang together and are concerned with validity *across* rather than within different ways of knowing, I have decided that they belong in the next section.

My criteria of practical knowledge are that it should: 1. make a difference; 2. be effectively competent; and 3. be appropriate.

Resonance of Knowing

One source of discomfort in writing this chapter has been the self-imposed structure, according to logic and Heron, of addressing each type of knowledge in turn. I chose it for fear of getting lost in intuitive confusion, but would now like to turn to criteria of validity that have a more holistic application, resonating across different ways of knowing. I start out with the criteria of knowledge being consistent, coherent, and congruent; having roots, demonstrable relevance and credibility; and being respectful of confidentiality.

Consistency, Coherence, and Congruence

This cluster of criteria which applies across time, methods, and areas of living, demonstrates the connection and coherence between the inner "root" process of experiential knowledge and the outer "branch" activity of practical knowledge.

I have noticed a number of different kinds of consistency. I regularly see consistency across different sorts of knowledge: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical (Heron 1992). That is, body messages and feelings translate into images, which give rise to ideas, and form the basis for action, not necessarily in that order. Within the category of presentational knowledge I have been repeatedly struck by the consistency of metaphors that arise spontaneously and either echo or interlink with each other.

As I look through the journals I see myself following a similar thread on different occasions and coming to the same conclusions or questions; I see different methods bringing me to similar outcomes; and interestingly I now see my daughter making links between her own history, family dynamics, and the effect of those on future generations and the planet.

Holistic metaphors

Evidence of the tendency towards healing and wholeness revealed by participation has been exciting — realising the potential of this kind of knowing, once awakened, to extend consciousness repeatedly and almost relentlessly in unanticipated directions. It is as if I were presented with web after web of meaning; each one confirming and expanding earlier tentative understandings; each one subtly different but pointing in similar directions, like so many snowflakes floating down on top of one another to make a multi-dimensional pattern, “a dense web of knowing” (Reason 1988). It brought to mind the metaphor of the hologram which focuses in one direction divergently on the macrocosm of the timeless universe; and in the other direction convergently on the microcosm of the relatively transitory and personal:

Need to talk about holograms, or does this come under Validity, as a means of “triangulating”: whatever hole I peer into and explore, I discover the same thing. What same thing? Me-split looking for me-whole?

Journal 2nd April 1993

The hologram, like the crystal suggested as an image for validity by Richardson (1994), recognizes that there are more than the three sides of triangulation to be considered.

I propose that the central image for “validity” ... is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous.

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose.

Richardson 1994 p. 522

The spiral is another metaphor that combines the qualities of convergence and divergence referred to above. I have found that evidence of the importance and relevance of material has emerged from a process of spiralling in to core experiences in my life and checking the relevance of a theme at different ages and stages, through memories and accounts of discovery work which I have done. What I find is congruence and coherence, an excitement in tracing the same thread in its different manifestations, sometimes to its very roots. I have been following the process with all major themes I have worked with, and I see that the spiral as a process is in itself congruent. I am surrounded by spiral pictures which are representations of my research at its various stages, and remember a description of an early stage of the research.

When I was first asked for my personal reasons for entering into research, ... I answered at a very superficial level, ... As time and thoughtfulness progressed I was aware of spiralling inward to ever deeper levels of reality as I discovered answers to this question.

Journal 8-8-88 Prussia Cove

Having spiralled in and reached the core of me by one route, this questioning and the search for solutions starts to spread up and outward again, and it is no coincidence that the deepest root of inner work in the world of presence connects to the furthest-reaching branch at a practical level in the world of existence.

One measure of this particular aspect of validity has been apparent as I have been reworking the thesis from the first draft. Almost no alteration has been "stand alone". Each passage that has needed attention has created ripples or waves throughout the whole, calling for constant cross referencing and adjustments to the whole system.

Roots, Relevance and Credibility

This criterion extends that of groundedness discussed in the context of experiential knowledge. To gain credibility with, and be relevant for other people, the knowing that I offer must not only be rooted in my experience, but also allow others to connect it to their own experience. Demonstrating the connection of inner and outer work makes the important link between personal history and practice in my process of knowing, as I move up the up-hierarchy from experiential to practical knowledge. This provides the grounding connection for practice with the world of presence (Heron 1992 p. 162).

Demonstrating my personal process

My process of coming to know commonly starts in one of two different ways, both of which involve applying "*critical subjectivity*" (Reason 1988) or "*consciousness in the midst of action*" (Torbert 1991) to the business of living. Either I notice a build up of a "message" from different sources which are all re-inforcing each other and pointing in the same direction; or a dramatic event takes place which brings learning.

In the first case I register messages coming from many sources, demonstrating congruence. They may be from dreams, meditation, work with others, previous history, relationships, tarot readings, acupuncture sessions, or physical symptoms.

In order to explore this incoming information I next use journaling, drawing, or co-counselling to try to make sense of the experience. Alternatively, if the messages are subtle or my attention blunt, I may first notice a repetitive theme when I review my journal. For instance,

the same issue may occur in conversation with many different people; I may lose a series of possessions; or one or more tarot cards may recur in several readings. I would then seek to answer the following questions:

What is this telling me?

How does this relate to the world?

Is it useful to other people?

In the second case when the initial trigger is a dramatic event, then I work backwards to see what has built up to that event and what has contributed to my perception of it as a significant learning point. I use reflection and journaling to deconstruct the event, and would have a co-counselling session to take this process deeper if it seemed necessary. Through this process I again collect messages from different sources pointing in the same direction.

I am certain that I have rarely if ever achieved a synchronous attention to all four territories of intuition, reason, my own action, and the outside world (Torbert 1991) but I am learning to achieve three way attention more regularly, and have used my journal to develop the habit of reviewing the missing areas more or less promptly after the event.

Having demonstrated my personal process, the question is whether a good enough story emerges from it, not only to give me understanding and learning, but to convince others of the relevance of such a process. In terms of the value of this thesis, is the content good enough? — quality data recorded in depth and detail over time — and is the medium good enough, in terms of the quality and energy of the writing?

One of the delights of the research experience has been the excitement of people who have read what I have written, have found it compelling, and have wanted to discuss issues. In spite of many such experiences I continue to be surprised that it should be “that interesting” to “those sort of people”, and see a lurking shadow of positivist doubt, giving inappropriate weight to my natural, but not excessive, diffidence. There is risk in bringing intimate material into the limelight, fear that it won't measure up, shame in being seen attempting to pass “women's talk” off as research.

I am still learning to be convincing and credible, having started with relatively gentle lessons in the Bath Research Group, become gradually more comfortable with each new stage of exposure, and learning to share confidently with progressively “difficult” audiences. Major “tests” have been my transfer to PhD when I had to sell my purpose to my supervisors and to the Research Group; my re-registration interview with my supervisors and another faculty member when I froze and could not at first summon the passion that eventually convinced him that I had a case; and a session at a research conference where I took the risk of

exposing my method and content to a group of potentially much less receptive strangers from a variety of other settings. I will elaborate on this experience.

At the Hawkwood conference I set out to demonstrate the relevance of very personal process to my practice in the world, by linking the "experience" of my conception with my experience as a facilitator of management development groups (see Chapter 11). I explained the context of my work, and the sort of research and writing I had been doing; then traced one thread back to its innermost origins in personal process, through the images and symbolism of dreams, and forward to using it to understand and work on current behaviour, applying the learning in the world. The feedback from that session showed that I achieved my purpose.

I took conception, fire and water, ice and freezing, relationships with men in organizations, and with my father. Read out bits at each point.

The result was warm appreciation, and a lot of humming and ahing about how personal process is relevant; about the depth of its relevance; and P said it "made me look at my life in a different way, and that's got to be worth an awful lot". ... A said she ... was stunned by the relevance.

All this is immensely important to me and has a lot to do with my own measures of validity. I agree that research is therapy and therapy is research but if research is just therapy then it is not valid. It must have a contribution for the world. Be useful, make a difference.

Journal 22nd September 1992

This test was given a particular edge by the mood of A, a powerful and articulate woman in the group. I shrank inwardly while she was talking angrily and dismissively of themes close to my heart in the session before mine, and resisted with difficulty the temptation to cop out. The fact that A was clearly not disposed to be sympathetic to my work, and that she revised her views of the new paradigm approach to research after my session, added weight to her enthusiastic response.

Less obvious but equally important progress markers have been my steadily growing confidence in using the "L" (love) word to business people without apology; the gradually lessening discomfort I experience in the use of the "S" (spirituality) word; and my increasing readiness to talk about "women's matters" of menstruation and menopause in some carefully chosen mixed groups.

One piece of noticing helped me in this progress towards greater conviction and credibility: I do not have to convince the other person in order for my knowing to survive encounters with other people. The test is that my knowing survives for *me*.

Respect and Confidentiality

There is a balance to be struck between honouring my experience and my humanity, and that of co-researchers, friends, and family. There are dilemmas to resolve where my need for disclosure may conflict with the privacy needs of others. So why the need to disclose?

My inquiry has shown that developing professional competence grows out of the interaction between me and a group, involving trust, mutual disclosure and vulnerability. That however, is only the tip of the iceberg. What allows me to drop old patterns and defences in order to act in this way is the insight into how these patterns originally arose. Spelling out those connections involves a further dimension of openness above and beyond the disclosures I would consider appropriate as a facilitator, and which I, as researcher, believe is a necessary part of demonstrating the authenticity of my inquiry into personal process.

What both of these levels of disclosure does is to move us, whether facilitator and group, or researcher and reader, towards a shared awareness and understanding of connection, and recognition of the wider context upon which we all have impact, whether as team or family members, colleagues in an organisation, or inhabitants of the earth.

At the end of this section I suggest that knowing that crosses the boundaries of worlds be: 1. consistent, coherent, and congruent across time, methods, and areas of living; 2. both divergent and convergent in its scope; 3. rooted, relevant and credible; and 4. that all knowing should be respectful of people and the planet.

In Conclusion

Having considered the many ways of measuring the quality of my experience, I wish to add some thoughts about the uncritical space which was a pre-requisite for this process.

Traditionally validity has been about pinning down and isolating a truth. This has made it difficult to allow my epistemology. In the first place by stopping me from thinking that way, and in the second place because I became pre-occupied with finding answers to "yes, but ..." type challenges either from genuine disbelievers or from friends using disbelief in the role of devil's advocate. I do not discount the value of such a role or the need for ideas to stand up to challenge. But what I have needed more is space, time and support in which I am encouraged to discover and understand what I think. I needed to get away from the excluding "yes, but ..." mode, and access the inclusive "and ... and" mode of "what if ..." and "just supposing ..." reflectiveness. I needed to learn to encourage the habit of suspending disbelief, of asking, not whether is this true, but "how might this be so?" The role, not of devil's but of angel's advocate who asks, in the spirit of inquiry rather than of judgement, "what is this telling you?" Only in that

safe space can I grow the confidence to meet the "yes, but ..." challenges and be in a position to choose how to respond.

7th May 1995

This need for encouragement rather than challenge is echoed in the experience of the women of the Belenky et al. study who *"found the experience of being doubted debilitating rather than energizing."* The authors comment further:

Because so many women are already consumed with self-doubt, doubts imposed from outside seem at best redundant and at worst destructive, confirming the women's own sense of themselves as inadequate knowers.

Belenky et al. 1986 p. 228

During a discussion about the need to find out what works rather than prove something true, to find Bateson's *pattern that connects* rather than the logic that divides, some reassuring words came from another member of the Bath Research Group:

What you and Bateson are saying, I think, is that we need myth and metaphor, art and poetry, sacred knowledge and symbolic rituals, in order to express more of our humanness and our interconnections with each other and the planet. We must embrace contradictions (paradox) not be scared of them.

Conversation with Allen Parrott 18th July 1991

The last word on this subject turns out to have been written very early on in the research years, and still holds good. For years there were messages knocking at the door of my consciousness and shadows flitting in my peripheral vision to which I turned a deaf ear and a blind eye because they were not valid in terms of the reality I had been taught to value. They were offering me knowing which is essentially mysterious and whose validity lies in the way it works in my life, rather than proof.

My starting point for validity is the same as the starting point for writing – in the middle of the spiral which is rooted in the centre of me. At the deepest level of the answer to the question "why are you doing this?" Way back in my childhood.

And one of the tests of whether that is valid for me is whether there is a route, a current, a river, a flow from that source to the sea. And whether a pattern exists on the way. Can I move out from that starting place and move in ever widening circles coherently? Are there meanings and sense which I can pick up on the way, from later periods of my life, my own experiences, the experience of others, friends, other writers, that I can weave in to my pattern. Other textures, other colours maybe, but which echo and complement the pattern that is mine. And, in the course of that flow from the centre outwards, are there also mini-flows, asides, a flow of giving

and taking to the environment, other people, the universe on the way? Is there a sense of having given fully as well of being able to receive? Is there a balance between the forward thrust of the movement forward to the sea, and the need to pause and absorb, and be, and contemplate, consolidate and integrate; neither stagnating in one place nor hurrying busily, noisily and superficially onward.

Journal 17th November 1988

Section 4

What?

Early Insecurity — shadows of my former self

This is the first chapter concerning the content of the research proper. It places a stake in the ground to mark my starting point as a professional facilitator, describes the problems I experienced then, and the way in which I worked through them.

In doing this it aims to draw parallels between the *interpersonal* relationship between me and a group as I sought to establish my identity as a facilitator, and the *intrapersonal* dynamic between me and myself in establishing my identity as a child. These two situations proved mutually illuminating, and understanding the roots of my difficulties as a facilitator allowed me to find more creative solutions.

I run the risk in this chapter of including much personal process which might be considered “just Jill’s therapy”, in which case it would have no place here. Certainly it has been therapy, but not “just” therapy. If I had simply used the facilitation role to understand myself better this charge would be justified. However, the learning has been just as much in the other direction and I could not have developed facilitation foundations that I trusted without that work. What I seek to demonstrate is that, just as my early facilitation problems had their roots in my childhood, so the growing out of them is similarly grounded and thoroughly worked through. The facilitation role is not a trivial one, and this was my way of honouring that and growing into it.

When I moved from facilitating personal growth groups informally at weekends to becoming a professional facilitator and trainer in a formal, commercial environment, I expressed doubts about whether my skills would transfer. These arose partly from lack of information about the expectations of students, partly from general lack of self-confidence. Anxiety about the change led me to doubt my well-established past competence. The real question was “could I *be myself* in the new setting?”

What follows started out as an inventory of early facilitation problems, and turned into an exploration of interconnected areas of development, sharing similar characteristics which I have named the “gap phenomenon”, a transitional syndrome noticable at different times and on different dimensions in my life.

The gap phenomenon manifests during transitions at three separate and interconnected levels: intrapersonal (Identity Gap); interpersonal (Credibility Gap); and intercultural (Paradigm Gap).

Transition at the intrapersonal level involves negotiating an “Identity Gap”, that Berman calls the basic fault or Self/Other split, and Heron refers to as the Subject/Object split. Before this transition the child has a view of the world that does not include the Self, what Heron calls

primal perception, fully participating in the affective mode. Acquiring cultural perception is part of growing up, of becoming individuated, but involves alienation from the participative modes, a split that needs healing in later life if the ego is to develop to the self-actualising states of personhood.

The interpersonal transition which I have called the “Credibility Gap” echoes the intrapersonal. This stage has involved not only Self-Other relationships, but also managing interaction with a whole group, and the search for a common ground of communication. The Credibility Gap describes this interaction when the quality and timing are unsatisfactory. I experienced some confusion in identifying this gap because I was developing my professional identity at the same time as beginning to heal the intrapersonal split of childhood. In retrospect I see this double focus producing an interesting creative tension: healing the intrapersonal split requires openness to, and immersion in, the participative modes, a tuning in at the kinaesthetic and imaginal level; whilst facilitating groups demands external awareness, producing a similar conflict to that experienced when driving while menstruating (see Chapter 6). In practice this simultaneous attention to internal healing and external management has been fruitful in producing a more connected style of facilitation than I might otherwise have developed.

Transition at the intercultural level moves across the “Paradigm Gap” with particular relevance of the incommensurable paradigms of the thesis title (see Chapter 2). This requires a third order of awareness, involving the need to recognise separate cultural identities, to transcend that difference and find a common context, a way of communicating across paradigms. The ultimate cross paradigm communication involves a shift into the transpersonal dimension. I believe that the process of inner growth and healing described above, and the need to bridge that communication gap, combined to provide the impetus that shifted my inquiry, rather unexpectedly, into that spiritual dimension.

The first manifestation of the gap phenomenon that I noticed was the “Credibility Gap”. I write of this first, and of the Identity Gap second because it reflects how I came to the problem and my deepening understanding of underlying issues and their implications. I do not write of intercultural issues here, partly because awareness of this dimension came much later and does not belong in “Early Insecurity”, partly because the whole thesis aims to demonstrate how I have attempted to cross the Paradigm Gap. However, the final section, Pretending, describes the early foreshadowing of this process.

Recognizing that these problem areas were not simply limitations to get rid of marked an important turning point. In each case, if I stayed with the discomfort long enough, I found another, positive, side to the coin which offered insight into another dimension of the facilitation process. For instance, my slowness to react to, or comment on, a group “event”

allowed groups to arrive at their own awareness and feel ready to admit it. The first time I noticed this, I thought it was simply a matter of timing and appropriateness. I came to realize, however, that it was also a question of operating at a qualitatively different (intuitive, or participative) level myself, and, far from apologising for that, using it to allow a group to develop and surface their own intuitive process, which in turn gave us a common language. Pretending, explored in the last section, started out as an escape or defensive withdrawal, and turned out to contain within it the opportunity for transformation.

In the time span of seven years involved I think I have moved from an emerging skill which was tentative and patchy due to lack of personal self-confidence, lack of faith in my purpose or skills, and fear of the people “out there” in the group, to a deliberately open style, which I hope and believe is increasingly grounded in the participative modes, and the growing courage of my convictions.

The Credibility Gap

I will first explain what I mean by the credibility gap, describe how the Gap occurs by exploring the issues of 1. Paranoia and Self-Image, 2. Visibility, and 3. Mirroring, and trace my process of gradually recognising, facing and exploring the Gap phenomena.

A key question that pre-occupied me as a new facilitator, and as a new researcher concerned the gap between the occurrence of a critical incident in a group I am facilitating, and my response to it. The gap was too long, and whether “too long” meant ten minutes, twenty-four hours, or ten days, my aim was to reduce it. I have called this the Credibility Gap because I believed that my credibility depended on eliminating or shortening it.

At first I experienced this gap as a straightforward delay in my cognitive process, a lack of mental agility, and envied people I worked with their ability to think fast on their feet, and to reflect back a group's process in terms of concepts. In time I was able to see this as a different, rather than a better strategy, and to value my own intuitive approach, which allowed a different kind of knowing to surface.

The fact that I often process events using intuition and images actually contributes to or causes the gap in some cases because although this may not in itself be a slower process, articulating those perceptions clearly *is* a slow process for me. I have come to see that, far from being a fault, this can have advantages for a group. By slowing down a group's process in this way I am allowing “being” to take place, and valuing the emergent feeling dimension.

In terms of John Heron's model, it takes time to sink down from the practical level of “doing”, through the conceptual (moving from the analytical to the reflective), and into the imaginal

and affective modes of “bottom tummy” knowing, and in this context the Gap, as time delay, has a valuable function, whether it occurs awarely and intentionally, or accidentally.

At other times, however, I experienced the gap as more than a delayed reaction. It was disabling and all-embracing, something that swallowed me up and denied me access to my intuition as well.

At these times I was cut off from the group I was with, unable to know or be known, in a kind of paralysis. I seemed to be seeing myself through the wrong end of a telescope, oddly dissociated from what I was seeing, hearing and saying. I felt as if I was in a glass box, cut off from directly engaging with the world, a state well described by Heron's alienated ego. Typically this would happen on the first or second day with a group, and if the course involved mutual feedback I would discover that other people had been aware of my “absence”, perceiving me as distant, unreal, or “not there” during that time. They had usually experienced this as inhibiting to the group's process.

The image of glass and the sense of separation clearly relate to the glass images described below in the mirroring theme, and also show an internal consistency and coherence with other personal evidence, that is, with the ice-cube in my conception fantasy¹. This suggests to me that they are all interconnected and related to the same phenomenon. The resemblance is not merely visual: it matches kinaesthetically. The feeling of being stopped and paralysed, frozen into mental and physical inactivity and silence, are identical.

Earlier draft July 1993

This passage shows my confusion of the interpersonal Credibility Gap within the group with the psychological Identity Gap within myself. It seems that the experience of discontinuity, of being “thrown”, and “at sea” in the group triggered the insecure feelings of an earlier transition.

If I try to carry on in this situation, forcing myself down the “normal” route, and, in terms of the Heron model, getting trapped in the conceptual layer because I think this is where I “ought” to be, it doesn't work. At these times I can't bring concepts to life. They are a foreign language, and my experience is of “falling into the gaps between words” (see Chapter 5), and feeling helpless. Typically at such times I fail, not only to find answers to questions from a group, but even to understand the questions themselves in the way that they are expressed. At these times I need to allow myself time: time to access intuition and feeling; time to

¹Described in Chapter 11

become credible. I can do this by simply calling a coffee break; or I can be explicit and make a comment on the group process and my need to reflect, inviting responses from the group.

I will now describe the Gap in terms of the three characteristics referred to above.

1. Paranoia and Self-Image

"Why are you so worried about people liking you?" said Dorothea.

The year is 1989 and the occasion is the individual feedback round at the end of my first ever personal awareness workshop in a commercial company. I am in the hot seat taking constructive criticism about myself and about the course. Dorothea pauses long enough to trigger the negative thinking to which she is drawing attention; and long enough for me to notice the uncomfortable accuracy of her perception. She adds a comment of reassurance, but the more valuable part of her feedback is that she has identified the paranoia that has been the most difficult problem to overcome since I started working with groups.

The paranoia sprung from my anxiety about being able to handle challenges made to me in a group to the point that I saw challenges everywhere, simply for fear of seeing them: the most innocent question seemed like a threat to my competence to answer it. Earlier, in 1988, I had written about the problem under the heading of "Feeling a Fake in Rio".

... it is the difficulty that other people have and their distress in the process which triggers me. I tend to exaggerate their difficulty. If someone demonstrates that they have a difficulty e.g. "I don't understand" or "I don't see the relevance of this exercise" then I assume that they will never understand, that I have spoken nonsense; that the exercise is irrelevant and that I am incompetent. I fail to see that they just need help and guidance, that I can explain again, or differently, draw examples from my own and their experience. ... I also assume that if one person doesn't understand, then nobody understands, and that everyone thinks it is irrelevant. They haven't even mentioned irrelevance – they have just asked to have the relevance shown to them.

Writings July 1988

When I wrote this I had been co-teaching a Knowledge Engineering course to a large group of Brazilians, and the problem had been exacerbated by the presence of three professors, and two "PhD"s from prestigious American universities, all apparent experts in an aspect of the subject. My perception was that they had more knowledge and skill than me. Their perception, however, I subsequently learnt, was that we were the experts, imported from the superior West, and they both welcomed our experience, and at the same time resented the

inferior position into which they had talked themselves and their so-called “underdeveloped” country.

I found being hailed as the great Western expert embarrassing because it devalued their very real expertise, and because it magnified my own feelings of being a fraud:

... I get caught into thinking that I am a fraud, and shouldn't be there at all; that what I have to offer is trivial, homespun and belongs in the privacy of my back kitchen, where it just might seem important. It has no place trying to find a place in the outside world. That is just laughable, and it makes me ridiculous. That says something about my self-image – I'm using my fat, inept, unpopular, introverted four or five-year old self-image. Also it has to do with having the courage of convictions about ideas/approaches which aren't immediately acceptable to a lot of people a lot of the time.

Writings July 1988

This description of my contribution as homespun and belonging in the kitchen is probably my first, and at the time unconscious, reference to a female way of knowing, a theme which is explored in Chapter 5. This account *almost* conjures up the richness of women sharing, but then quickly slams the door on that dawning awareness, dismissing it and denying it value or legitimacy. When coupled with “trivial”, the word “homespun” becomes pejorative; “privacy” has, for me, overtones of a covert activity, and of hiding shame, and emphasises that which is shut out (as opposed to “intimacy” which focuses on and values that which takes place within); the “back kitchen” suggests strongly that out-of-the-way place where women belong in the eyes of men, the scullery where the hard labour takes place, rather than the creative, focal heart of the matrifocal household.

I go on to talk of the unacceptable self-image invoked by the unaccepting people in the outside world. This theme resonates with the fantasy of seeing myself as a child showing my knickers in front of the men in dark suits, which is described in Chapter 11. A similar image appears in my reflections shortly after running the course in Rio:

I'm fat and ugly and stupid and clumsy and no-one wants to be friends with me. A visual image ... so strong that, when I am in that mode and see myself in a mirror, I experience some level of surprise.

... I want to be liked, and have a pre-occupation with self which stops me seeing clearly what is happening in a group and what the needs of students are. Away from the group I can recognise that questions and disagreements are rich opportunities for learning and should be pursued. But in the group my frightened Child tells me to keep my head down and survive since flight is not an option. So I don't challenge angry mutterings or draw out people who look fed up, for

fear of not being able to handle what I might hear. That is, a) not being able to handle the feeling of being rejected; and b) not being able to explain or maintain my position intellectually.

Writings 26th August 1988

If I give in to paranoid fear it distances me just as much as blaming group members or writing them off as stupid, unco-operative, or lacking in insight. This ensures that the real reasons for the questions, silences, or tensions never emerge. Both judgements are made according to my perception of the world, and do not entertain the possibility of another perception, let alone the possibility of communication across that divide. On the contrary, the judgements preclude communication by creating a hostile Other (where probably none existed), a them-us situation which obscures the more important and interesting differences which will never now be explored.

2. Visibility

To succeed as a facilitator and a business woman I had to be prepared to become more visible. The strategy of keeping a low profile which I had used most of my life was no longer a viable option. When I set up in business I wrestled with the reality of becoming visible in the world in a way which as a social worker had not been an issue. One of the problems of mainstream social work is that social workers more often maintain the status quo, than act as agents for change, and thus only become visible when things go wrong. I was conscious of wanting to become more of a change agent, but did not anticipate the visibility that this would entail. I found this challenging, not only in terms of individual assignments or presentations, but also because achieving success increased expectations (both my own and others'), which I then felt obliged to live up to.

Another aspect of moving into the commercial world was that I was moving out of the predominantly female world of social work, into a predominantly male world. The transition from a female (back kitchen) communication style, to a male (boardroom) style, involves a lot of presentation, both of the person and of that which is to be communicated. It is not only a question of language (not shared, so needing to be more explicit), but of packaging which signals a communication to be delivered. Often a woman's contribution is not seen or heard, and therefore ignored, because she fails to draw attention to it "appropriately", that is in a way that a man will recognise. Much of women's difficulty in this context comes from being brought up to be inconspicuous and not to attract attention. A phrase I remember from childhood as the ultimate deterrent was "people will look at you". A fact I had to come to terms with as a facilitator was that people would indeed look at me.

The following journal entry explores my early feelings about this issue of visibility.

On Being a Chameleon

One of the skills that women get taught is to blend — with the wall- paper in the case of wallflowers, with the crowd, but most of all with the man. With the result that they often don't know what they want until the other person tells them, gives them a cue about what is acceptable.

In most new situations I still take on the chameleon role. It's called testing the temperature of the water, etc. Actually it is being afraid to be myself, until I'm sure the new people are pussy cats and not tigers. And sometimes it's too late then to change: I have already been cast in a role or ignored. Or they are indeed tigers, and if I had only bounced in being positively myself and unafraid, they would have eaten out of my hand; as it is they will eat me for breakfast if I rattle the cage. You can't make a glorious entrance if you've been sitting in the room for some time.

Strands are beginning to come together and interconnect and make sense: ever since I set up my own business, visibility has been an issue for me. Yet only as I wrote the above did I realise that being visible is directly the opposite of being a chameleon. ...

Visibility involves having the courage of convictions, speaking up for them, commitment long term (in spite of that taboo against getting involved). Once you've been visible you have to keep it up — you can't slip into oblivion again. People have expectations of me. And I have an obligation to do the best for whatever people or issue I am involved with.

Writings November 1988

Having long understood the importance of finding my voice, noticed the need also to become visible, and been unclear about where the two intersected, I was grabbed by the findings of Belenky et al. in this area.

The tendency for women to ground their epistemological premises in metaphors suggesting speaking and listening is at odds with the visual metaphors that scientists ... most often use to express their sense of mind.

Belenky et al. 1986 p. 18

They suggest that visual metaphors imply the separation of an objective view and that unlike seeing, "speaking and listening suggest dialogue and interaction". It had not occurred to me that the development of visibility and voice might be gendered, I am not totally convinced, but the idea is tempting and gives food for reflection.

3. Mirroring

I have already mentioned my surprise at seeing a competent adult in the mirror when I was feeling childish and insecure inside. A mirror, whether made of glass or metaphorical, is an important piece of equipment, as we search for credibility in the transition from the kitchen to the boardroom. We constantly need to check the changes of image and presentation that we make. *Has it slipped? Is it really OK? Does it still look right? Is it really me?* are some of the questions for which we seek answers and reassurance.

Another journal entry of that time picks up the mirror theme and reveals that part of me which is again pre-occupied with the unresolved Identity Gap, and more concerned with being liked than with meeting the needs of my students.

I am looking for evidence to improve my four-year old self-image. I am using every course as a mirror to hold up to check how my reflection is looking, instead of looking at the students. ... like using shop-windows as reflectors, rather than looking at the goods displayed behind them. ...

Going back to the analogy of the shop window, it is not enough to stay outside and look in; I need to get the other side of the glass. That way my self-image is not exclusive to me, it is just another thing to be considered with everything and everyone else.

Writings 26th August 1988

A much later journal entry expands the theme during some work in Harrow with a group of women from varied cultural backgrounds who were wanting to make the transition from home and children (and kitchen), back into paid employment. This time I am using myself (and the group) as a mirror for the group members, for them to use to adjust their images of themselves, to see their situations, their qualities, and the possibilities open to them. My notes of their feedback record that one woman reported totally changing the way she looked at her life; that two more had new perspectives on their view of the extended family; and that another was specific about shifting her self-image away from the negative comparison with her twin sister.

*Mirroring and reflecting ... noticing that I used to reverse the mirroring, using the group as a mirror for **me** rather than vice versa. A certain amount of that is valid and inevitable (for me). In fact **not** doing that misses learning. Needs to be a revolving mirror turned most of the time to the group*

Journal 27th April 1993

Here I am taking a much more balanced view of mirroring as a two-way process between myself and the group. The focus has moved away from the potential of that information to destroy me.

The updating of self-image has been a major theme in some groups. I make a distinction between self-esteem and self-confidence, where self-esteem involves feeling good *internally*, loving oneself; and self-confidence consists of acting effectively *externally*, particularly in high profile situations. Being high in one and low in another leads to traits which may appear inconsistent to outsiders. People with sound self-esteem and low self-confidence who have worked at becoming more assertive often fail to recognise their own progress and need to bring their own picture of themselves more in line with the perception of others. The comments of S, a student express a process that I also recognized in myself.

The most important thing that I gained ... was ... a single statement that Jill made: "Maybe you should update your self-image". ...

Hearing how I was seen by other people ... let me compare the image that they had of me with the image that I had of myself.

It gave me the idea that whilst you know yourself better than other people know you, the way they see you may be more accurate than the way you see yourself.

Looking back on some of my experiences I knew that I coped well and managed to take control when necessary, but still felt insecure and lacked confidence. It was only when I looked at these contradicting messages that I realized that I really was much stronger and more capable than I had previously believed. I always could cope, but often I didn't feel that I could. Now I know that I can.

S Written Comments 1990

S makes a very clear distinction between her internal, private self and the self which is available to others. It is a common distinction, made and maintained by many people. The boundaries are often jealously guarded, need careful management, and, as S found, need re-negotiating periodically. It is all part of our individual drive to answer the question "*who am I?*" and to repossess the direct *experience* of that identity which we had as small children, and which, ironically, and by definition, vanishes as soon as we acquire *knowledge* of our existence. In terms of the Heron model, this happens when, on the contracting development cycle, we acquire language at the Conceptual node, and lose some of our connection to the participative modes at the Affective and Imaginal levels. In Berman's words:

in daily life, the line between Self and Other, or kinesthetic and visual, is constantly being negotiated. We are always, in some sense, being "confiscated", and this is a dance that is played around the basic fault.

Berman 1990 p.38

So what is the "actual" self? The internal self? The self we (think) we present? Or the self that others see? I began to see Self as an act of co-creation, participation, a synthesis of

these. Hence the need for integration and interaction to create a coherent self. S is moving toward this in allowing others to influence her self-perception, and using the more confident "out there" self to nurture the inner self:

For a long time I was only using strength and energy in crises, generally to support others. Now I also use the same energy for my own benefit.

S Written comments 1990

Berman comments on mirroring in the context of child development. In the same way that the mother's facial expression and the looking glass play a part in developing the child's sense of identity, so the group-as-mirror was an important tool for me in developing my facilitator identity.

The Identity Gap

At this point I arrived at another kind of gap phenomenon, the Self-Other split, a psychological phenomenon which Berman (1990) refers to as the *catastrophe of the gap*. It occurred to me that the credibility gap experienced as I moved towards establishing my identity as a competent facilitator was an interesting echo, a microcosmic reflection, of that more fundamental development of identity.

I noted that the problems of paranoia and the pre-occupation with mirroring are very similar, and that my strategies for overcoming them, using intuition and self-disclosure, discussed in a later chapter, are strategies for opening up to the participative modes and connecting with the environment.

Berman suggests that the Self/Other split generally takes place in the second or third year of life, but also refers to the birth experience as "the most fundamental discontinuity of our lives", and acknowledges the disturbances that take place in the womb. My sense is that a series of splits take place, that our connectedness is tenacious and hangs in there until the weight of evidence against it and the pressure to conform become too overwhelming and we give in. But our potential for connectedness never goes away, a view shared by Heron:

we relegate into relative unawareness our felt participation in the world and the imaginal component in perception. I do not, however, believe this relegation is absolute, but that it allows for episodes of relative awareness ...

Heron 1992 p.77

When the pain of disconnection becomes too great, then it breaks through our defences to remake that connection.

My experience is that the connection does not become whole and strong straight away. It builds, just as it broke, in fits and starts over time. We forget the connection, then remember it, and grow it some more until it is strong enough to be a continuous thread in our lives. Although I may have lost the connection many times and over long periods in my life, I think I have rarely lost the consciousness of that loss. Although I didn't recognise it, part of me mourned, and I was therefore depressed, or restless and searching. One remarkable piece of evidence for this losing and rediscovery process is the letter from myself described in the preface which I lost for thirty five years.

When I first read Berman's summary of the research on this subject I questioned the dating of the split from the child's earliest memory, maybe because I have some exceptionally early memories. The earliest of these have a distinctly dreamlike quality presumably because they were pre-verbal. Tracking them confirms to me that self-recognition comes in dribs and drabs and seems established by the age of two.

Memories of course become embellished by family anecdotes and by subsequent familiarity with their physical context. I have attempted here to get back to the original by tuning in to body and sense awareness, and screening out anything I could not have known by these means. Inevitably some of these data creep back in the process of describing them in meaningful words.

I have a mere wisp of very early memory from the age of five months consisting of noise and shadow which circumstances suggest coincided with the first "doodlebug" (a bomb with a homing device which emitted a very loud noise) going over our house, providing the sort of shock and distress referred to in the research Berman cites. Two "snapshot" memories follow at about eighteen months and two years. The first is dark, blurry and mysterious, dominated by sense impressions of storm, darkness, and being high up in my pram on a bridge in a thunderstorm. The second is clear cut, colourful and happy of finding toadstools in the New Forest. In the fourth I am somewhere between two and four years old and the split seems well established. I opposed my mother's choice of dress and have a mirror image of myself in the hated "fat dress", a flowery print which I see as both fat and ugly.

This last seems like a marker memory. It is different in an important respect. The first two are "associated" memories, that is, I am not included in the picture, which consists of my field of vision. The third includes a shadow awareness of self like an aura around my peripheral vision. The last one is "dissociated", that is I see myself in the memory picture, evidence that I knew then that I was an other for others, and what is more, I didn't like the other that I was.

But it is in the leap from self-recognition to self-awareness that the psyche is torn in two. The shock is not that the Other exists, but that you realize that you are an Other for other Others.

Berman 1990 p.36

Spontaneous Self

What of the other me? The spontaneous child who existed before that Self/Other split? The pre-split child is very different from the self-conscious, sulky child of the Fat Dress. I can't identify with the memory of her, but I hear reports of her and see photographs of her. The evidence is that she was a happy, loving, spontaneous child, and I call her Jill-Susan because that is the name I gave myself in that transitional phase between an unconscious, fully associated existence, and the later dissociated state of seeing myself "out there" as others might see me.

One manifestation of this transitional phase is the transitional object, of which I had two (transitional) sorts. The first was a threadbare and dirty piglet who got lost and gave way to Mousie, an invisible companion who went everywhere with me between the ages of about three and four. He is a very vivid memory and must be important in charting my relationship with visibility. Was he a transitional stage in invisible me becoming hidden? Was he, quite literally, the shadow of my former self?

Quite unexpectedly, in the autumn of 1989 I encountered the former Jill-Susan self during an exercise at a chanting workshop with Jill Purce. Along with a roomful of other people, I closed my eyes and chanted my own name, over and over again, experimenting with all possible shapes and sounds of that single syllable. The sound took over, and it became a kind of search or quest, very urgent and very painful. I was running after a confident, carefree blonde-haired child as she ran along a ridge and stopped to play under a tree. Although I called and called her by name, she ignored me.

She doesn't seem to hear me. She's in a world of her own. I am crying and sobbing. I am desperate for her to stop, to hear, to come. There's a don't-leave-me, why-did-you-leave-me?, where-have-you-been?, I-can't-cope-without-you desperation. She reaches a tree and stops to play, turning towards me, oblivious, not seeing me. As if I'm invisible.

Journal 12th November 1989

This glimpse of an identity which was lost happened at the end of two intensive days of sound and vibration using channels unknown or unused by me. I came out of the exercise drenched in tears and sweat, feeling breathless and exhausted, and overwhelmed by the sense of loss and desertion. It cause me pain so intense that it even occurred to me to

wonder whether I had had a twin sister whom no-one had told me about. The power of this experience convinces me that our history is indeed encoded in our bodies.

The fact that we live mostly at the practical and conceptual level of Heron's uphierarchy means that we rarely choose to activate those channels, and even when we do, we attach little conscious weight to the results. This is even more resoundingly true in the business world. The idea of *mens sana in corpore sano* is hardly new, but we pay lip service to it, or concentrate on fitness to the point of addiction which is far from sane, without entertaining the deeper implications of the notion. I know this is overwhelmingly true of myself, and I have enormous resistance to doing anything about it. However much we neglect, ignore or abuse our bodies and our feelings, we are, as Berman says, inescapably physical beings.

... regardless of what visual con game goes down, the kinesthetic level always remains.

Berman 1990 p.37

and

... adults in social situations have to keep talking constantly, so that (visceral) reality will not break through.

Berman 1990 p.37

This is reminiscent of Sue's comment that you can't start hugging men in suits without getting arrested (see Chapter 11). Hugging is an invitation to the visceral or the participative and cannot be risked.

According to Berman all the studies of mirroring in children show that there is no distinct end to the process of negotiation between the kinaesthetic and the visual, it remains incomplete.

There is something about our body image, and the Self/Other distinction, that is never finished.

Accounts are never closed here — a fact that has serious consequences for adult life.

Berman 1990 p.31

This would accord with the incremental progression of those early memories from shadow to light; with the existence of Jill-Susan; with the fact that after long periods of thesis writing I have to check in the mirror that I still exist; with the fact that I still talk to myself when I have important decisions to make; and with the recurrence of the gap phenomenon in the course of developing my facilitator identity.

All of these activities are part of a healthy relationship to the Self, first discovering and establishing that identity, and then honouring and valuing the different roles played by the inner and outer parts of the Self. Having traffic and interactions across that self-self border

supports and nourishes me-in-the-world, and make it possible for me to communicate across the Self-Other divide. If I don't have enough time on my own, so necessary to maintain that connection with the inner me, I become disconnected, and feel somehow outside of myself. At these times I encounter myself as if at the wrong end of a telescope, smaller than life size, and needing to take a closer look at myself. Heron's diagram of the precipitated ego which is cut off from the participating modes is another way of representing how I feel at those times.

The defensive activity of Pretending described in the next section is an example of such cut off behaviour at the Imaginal level. It started out as an escape in an alienated and restricted way, inventing masks to cope with anxieties and projections of the hour; and progressed to finding its own solution by growing its roots back down into the feeling mode and thus becoming a source of creative energy. The "methods" which allowed this to happen started almost accidentally or unconsciously in a haphazard way. Only my journaling drew them to my attention, and it was some time before I would admit them, or consider them valid. In retrospect I see these early stepping stones as part of my journey back to reclaiming my intuition and healing the Self/Other split.

Pretending

In this section I will explore the history of my relationship, both positive and negative, with the imaginal world. This will include the innocent fantasies of childhood, and how pretence became both a trap and a means of survival in later childhood and adulthood. Once I allowed myself to look at this uncomfortable part of my personality I discovered a richness within which is contained both the seeds of recovery and a potentially useful tool.

Both as a child and an adult pretending has been for me a method of survival, and went with leading my life in a compartmentalised way, so that I could be different things to different people without conflict. I differentiate here between a healthy interaction involving self-esteem, curiosity and mutual respect, where it is natural for encounters with different people and ideas to bring out different aspects of the self in a dynamic and spontaneous way; and unhealthy interaction involving low self-esteem, anxiety, and defensiveness, where the presenting of each aspect of self is controlled by the need to adapt behaviour to the expectation of others. Another variation is rebellious behaviour which is not freely chosen, but is equally controlled by the need to be reactive, regardless of outcome. I had a mixture of these behaviours, and as I became more self-aware, the areas of growth sat uncomfortably alongside areas of conditioned behaviour.

As I was making these changes, I was simultaneously learning to facilitate groups, partly by being a member of co-counselling groups, partly by assisting with their facilitation, and eventually attending a co-counselling teacher training course, where I gained accreditation to

teach solo. I made a life decision at that time to have less compartments, more consistency across roles, to face rather than avoid the conflicts this involved, and to use my energy more creatively. It was natural to develop my facilitation style along the same lines as I was attempting to live my life, with as much openness and honesty as my awareness and courage allowed.

It was easy enough to "be myself" in the "alternative" culture, sitting on the floor and wearing jeans. The formality of the commercial setting, however, triggered old messages to follow social conventions of being polite and saying the "right" rather than the honest thing. Many of those prompts involved dress: not only the dark suits of the men, but the crisp bows, high heels, and painted nails of the women, and the smart clothes I was wearing myself, affected me adversely. At some level, I felt inadequate because I was unable to tie a presentable bow on my blouse. On the one hand I actually spent time practising this elusive skill as if my success depended on it; on the other I was ashamed to be so affected by something so obviously trivial. Thus, the threat of the business setting tempted me to fall back on the old survival mode of pretending, and it was at this point that I "noticed" this behaviour for the first time and began to examine it.

... I was taken aback at the alacrity with which ... a friend agreed that pretending is something she strongly associated with me.

I have spent most of my life pretending, either awarely or unawarely. My early childhood was spent almost entirely in a fantasy world, and the reality of school hit me traumatically. My dreaming had left me vulnerable and inept, and I had to learn a different sort of pretending in order to survive.

On thinking further about this, I identified two kinds of pretending at first: using imagination, and distorting truth. I later added lying about facts.

Writings November 1988

There was also the social facade manifested in my Naval Officer's Daughter (NOD) sub-personality who is still around, and has her uses occasionally. Once she taught me to take strong drink and entertain with small talk, which was preferable to standing in silent embarrassment, but now she is a genderless saboteur who is all facade. She is efficient and superficial in a metaphorical cocktail dress, has platitudes coming out of her mouth, no connection between head and heart, and nothing meaningful in her head at all. If I have to dress formally she is always waiting in the wings, and she will ambush me at coffee breaks on occasions when she has otherwise been absent. If she hi-jacks me when I'm facilitating she stops me being myself, or giving of myself, and I feel surrounded by a plastic shell, the social manifestation of the ice-cube.

The point is I can't get rid of NOD at will. ... She takes care of social occasions. ... Except now that amounts to sabotage. I don't need that safety any more. It just isolates me from the people I want to be close to. I used to dramatise things once — I thought it was to make me more interesting. But actually it was so that I could be upset — and that let me break through into being real ...

Journal 29th May 1989

My instinct to get *upset* was along the right lines, and eventually I found a more effective, aware, and authentic way of breaking through into feelings by using the cathartic methods of co-counselling. Members of the Bath Research Group will recognise similar behaviour (referred to in Chapter 5) when I have been stuck in discussing my progress in the Group, and tears became equated with potential for progress.

A facade phenomenon similar to NOD which I have called the plastic personality occurred on presentation skills courses and is explored in Chapter 15.

The facade is a defensive activity that covers deficiencies, whereas the other sort of pretending uncovers riches, both of which played a large part in my childhood.

Using Imagination

This sort of pretending can include anything from a well-run brainstorming session, to a total withdrawal into a fantasy world. At best it is creative involvement with images and symbols ... switching off the intellect and using intuition as a key to understanding, ... or a way to a higher level, maybe to spiritual awareness.

It includes the let's-pretend games of childhood, the invisible companions, the total absorption and identification with storybooks and fairy tales; particularly the story which has to be re-told night after night after night, and the one which is so frightening that the cover can't be opened, and it is impossible to go to bed with it in the bedroom. With that intensity of imagination which we probably only experience in childhood or with the help of drugs, the line between fantasy and reality is blurred ...

My fantasy world included dolls, teddies, Pig It was closely linked to my favourite trees, ... listening to the earth, witnessing sunrises, ... and always the sea and the moon. It was a totally different thing from the let's-pretend games and stories instituted by my mother.

My mother's games and stories were limited and limiting, keeping me constantly tied to the mundane, and the safety of mother's apron strings. I was not an adventurous child and I frightened easily, so I wallowed happily in their cosiness. They were not inventions that explored mysteries or sent me spinning off into rich and colourful worlds over the horizon. There were no

metaphors or symbols; ... no bad fairies or witches; nothing in short which might remotely risk giving me a nightmare. ...

These games became almost a substitute for reality, certainly for me, and I suspect for her too to some extent. They became a close bond between us, a cocoon against the world, which cosily deadened the noise of reality like so much cotton wool excluding the unfamiliar or the unpleasant. Tommy Worm enjoyed a never ending supply of stripy jerseys and scarves to keep him warm, ... Fairy Mossy Fern drank endless cups of tea. ... The only discordant note was struck by the moralising tones of ... Lady Marrow, who was only concerned with appearances and constantly intervened to ensure that toys were cleared away before we went out ...

Writings November 1988

The effect of my mother's make-believe world was to cut us both off from the frightening side of experience, which Jung called the *Shadow*, the world of deep feelings. Inadvertently this also cut us off from the fertile compost that feeds and heals. I have no doubt that she did this out of love and a protective instinct, but nevertheless still feel the truth of Laing's comment:

Children do not give up their innate imagination, curiosity, dreaminess, easily. You have to love them to get them to do that. Love is the path through permissiveness to discipline, only too often to betrayal of self.

Laing 1967 p.60

But I notice that I did not give up my dreaminess, that she did not insist upon it, and that in some sense she passed her own on to me. I also notice that the story I asked to be read over and over every night until my parents both knew it by heart, was called "*The Stolen Shadow*". The story had no literary merit, was not a great fairy story or myth, but significantly I have remembered it for forty five years, and it causes me a little gasp of amazement to notice how such tiny details fit into this pattern that I am weaving.

Another way I clung to the shadow side was through a recurrent nightmare. Although I note a positive energy in this dream in Chapter 11 in connection with my conception fantasy, as a child I experienced it as a nightmare which threatened to blow me apart and send the fragments spinning into outer space. Certainly it was frightening, but it was also a message, a signpost from the unconscious. And even as a small child I knew this at some level: I would only allow my father to comfort me after nightmares. I must have known that my mother, in her concern to dispel the fear, would have somehow neutralised the power and so dishonoured the intent of the dream. The subject of dreams is pursued in Chapter 7.

The learning, which eventually emerged out of all this for me as an adult and a facilitator, was that there was a positive side to pretending that had nothing to do with the defensive games and masks. Exploring it gave me access to a powerful intuition, and rich images, which could help me out of my difficulties as in the following journal entry:

One useful function of imagination occurs when I am running courses. It involves allowing myself to play a pretend game about the participants, by noticing the images and symbols which each person suggests to me, and taking them seriously. The tendency is to dismiss and suppress such images as inappropriate or in some way insulting or lacking in reverence for the wholeness or humanness of the individual. Also it feels just plain silly and indulgent, and there are fears that the image, which is, after all only my projection, will take over and stop me seeing the person fully. ... But I find that following the image is the way to seeing the person more clearly, or at least to understanding my response to that person. By exploring it I can come to guess at their needs of the course. This helps me to plan opportunities for these needs to be met, but above all it helps me to handle my own feelings towards them, approach them, and then respond to them more helpfully, ...

Writings November 1988

What I am doing here is replacing an involuntary and unaware projection with a deliberate and conscious projection. The first has produced negative feelings that inhibit me from relating to this person, and the second helps me to find a way past these feelings. Once I have done that and met the person I can discard the image and get to know the person as they "really" are. Sometimes I might share my impressions, but I would not always consider that helpful or appropriate.

Heron (1992) adds a further dimension to this experience of images arising. Talking of the "group communion" that develops in an intensive group that have been in close association for some time in a culture of openness and authenticity, he suggests that a holonomic phenomenon takes place in which *"the whole group is within each person, and each person pervades the whole group"*. This takes place at the level of participative feeling in the Affective mode. He stresses the importance of the facilitator's role in such a group:

Hence the importance of training group facilitators to resonate with this field at their own feeling level to establish a dynamic basis out of which images and concepts of appropriate interventions can emerge.

Heron 1992 p. 98

The imagination of the Intuitive mode working on the feelings of the Affective mode also allowed me to access my own feelings that were masked by a kind of paralysis associated with the alienated ego and the credibility gap. By attending to body symptoms in terms of

images I was able to lift the corner of that paralysis and take the spiral in towards my centre, rather than allowing old conditioning to take me out and away into the unreal defended position of the glass box or the reverse telescope.

At a research conference some years ago I took the opportunity in a small group session to explore that paralysis problem. I knew that I had uncovered something significant when the work I did released a wave of emotion which manifested physically in an overwhelming migraine. The metaphorical manifestation was a boggy or seaweedy entity I called "Squidge", which was located in my stomach, and which I recognised as a barometer for critical emotions I was picking up in a group, and which could alert me in a timely fashion to an issue that needed attention. I learnt that, when Squidge lurched, I should pay attention and dive into that uncomfortable feeling, rather than try to ignore and rise above it.

This strategy has repeatedly solved the problem of my paranoia and involves becoming visible and vulnerable, staying in touch with body knowledge, engaging at a feeling level, and encouraging openness. I rarely refer to Squidge now, but have learnt to trust my gut in all situations of decision making and conflict. I resonated strongly with Inez, one of the women in the study by Belenky et al. (1986 p. 53), who says *"I can only know with my gut. ... My gut is my best friend — the one thing in the world that won't let me down"*.

Another way of escaping from alienation was the experience of "falling into the gaps between the words" (described in Chapter 5). This was a response to feeling out of touch with a Research Group discussion. I allowed myself to fall into the gaps and keep on falling, into a kind of universal silence, letting go of any attempt to engage with the group at an intellectual level. In terms of Heron's model I was sinking down to the participative levels of the uphierarchy. The pre-conditions for this were a body awareness which was new in its intensity, and an experience of an altered state of consciousness or perception on the way to the group. I still don't fully understand the process that went on, but it seems that a coincidence of conditions allowed me to release some of what Reich calls body armour.

For Reich was right: our cultural history is encoded in our bodies, and as you begin to sort one out, you will sort the other out as well. Let yourself move back and forth, then, between your own bodily history and an examination of larger cultural processes and assumptions. It is in this back-and-forth movement, I am convinced, that real understanding takes place.

Berman 1990 p.23

Students often refer to the "real" world back at work as if what happens in the classroom does not count. I prefer to see what I offer as a route back to the more authentic parts of themselves, a departure from the pretences and defences more usually practised. At the same time I need to honour their perspective and the pressures they experience from that

other reality. That is part of my bridging role. But the bridge needs to be a bridge of authenticity, not a bridge of collusion which simply makes links for the sake of a “feel good factor”, implicitly condoning rather than confronting signs of defensive or cynical habits, and tempting me to creep back into old habits of pretending.

Pretending is a creeping paralysis, starting with minor concessions because it feels so unreasonable, so uncomfortable, so unpopular to be so uncompromising. I am tempted so often to “let that go”, to turn a blind eye “just this once”. As a facilitator I will pretend not to have heard a remark, or noticed the tone of it, because it is safer and easier so. And by doing that I am implicitly saying that its OK (even expected) to pretend here, just like anywhere else. I have failed to challenge the cultural norm and to establish a different culture in the group. And by doing that I am making it unsafe to be honest.

Writings November 1988

Feedback, like the following comment from a student, encouraged me in the belief that not pretending was a vital ingredient in the culture I was creating.

I remember Mark commenting at the end of the course, how he had tried to remain cynical but that he had noticed that the one thing that was not happening in the group was that people were not playing their usual social games, and that was the thing that convinced him that I was on to something, that there was something valuable there for him.

Writings 21st November 1990

If we believe that the Other is something to be feared, it is dangerous to appear vulnerable, and pretending becomes a habit, a way of papering over the basic fault. I have come to believe that my vulnerability is a key facilitation tool, and the centred and grounded side of the coin of insecurity. I do not advocate naive vulnerability that invites cynical, angry, or frightened people to poke you to see if it hurts. To be vulnerable I have to use my sense of connection and my trust in my intuition as protection, rather than masks and defences. Sometimes this feels very exposed, sometimes too big a risk to take, sometimes I am clumsy, but I never stop believing that this is the way for me to be.

Having set out the early problems I encountered, and laid the foundations for the sort of facilitator I wanted to become, the next five chapters address different aspects of facilitating in organizations and issues I found it necessary to address.

Chapter 10

Transitional Space —the crack between the worlds

In bridging paradigms that are incommensurable I find myself constantly in transit between one view of the world and another, moving back and forth across boundaries.

This chapter consists of a number of snapshots of the aspects of transition that have seemed to me most important. Its jerky quality reflects the elusiveness of transitions, and the stop-start mixture of excitement and resistance involved in taking new risks or reconnecting with old emotions.

*Sundancer, dancing to the light,
We give our whole being to open up our sight,
So that we may see the visionary landscape unfurled,
And we may dance through the crack between the worlds.*

Song, author unknown

Transitions are interesting, fearful, and much neglected in our culture. We have very few rites of passage in our society and those that we do have tend to have lost their connection with the meaning of what they represent. The outward and physical symbolism of an inner and spiritual journey has largely disappeared. If transitions are either ignored or made too carefully smooth there is no opportunity for the expression and catharsis of the strong emotions and conflicts that are present at such times.

Everyone experiences major transitions, from birth, through the life stages, to death. Some are smooth, some are traumatic, but we tend to carry the pattern of early transition experience through life. I had a stable and happy childhood marked nevertheless by some notable discontinuities: like my mother before me and my son after me, I had a traumatic birth; my father was absent for large parts of my early childhood; we moved every two years; and my first real friend was killed in traumatic circumstances during my twelfth year. Maybe the last was a very fertile disjunction because it was shortly after that that I wrote the letter described in the preface.

As a facilitator of personal development courses in an organisation I stand at a transitional place where two worlds meet: the highly structured and action focused world of the organization, and the reflective space of the course where the focus is on the individual and the personal. The transition is not seamless, there is nearly always a gap, a crack between the worlds, a disjunction between the known and the unknown or unexpected, the actual and the potentially realisable which generates anxiety, excitement, and sometimes anger.

For students of courses there are the more obvious transitions concerning arriving, and managing the pre-occupations of work or personal life, and the more private dilemmas

involving decisions about how much private material to bring across the divide into the public domain; the leap of courage from silence into disclosure; and the sometimes unexpectedly difficult transitions of ending, involving separation from the group and returning to the organization, sometimes with an altered awareness.

As facilitator I have a role in these transitions as doorkeeper, midwife, or bridge builder. Like the Roman god Janus my primary task as a doorkeeper is to protect their coming in and their going out. Bearing the organisation culture in mind I aim to create and work within the culture of the group (managing expectations at the start, and helping to manage re-entry problems at the end). Within the group I provide external activities, while also attending to the inner world and making space for it to emerge.

Another task of the doorkeeper is to challenge people who seek to enter, checking their motives, and that they have come to the right house. As a facilitator that role sees me exploring objectives with all students, and negotiating with those who have been “sent” to find a reasonable outcome for all concerned, which may include persuading them to leave.

As people leave the house the doorkeeper checks that they are equipped for their journey, and are not taking anything with them that is not theirs to take. Thus there needs to be some preparation for re-entry into the organisation and/or family, and reminders about the confidentiality of the group experience.

Working on the Edge

People often come on personal development courses because they are at transition points in their lives and need to reflect on their position and direction. They may be breaking through into Heron's participating modes of affect and imagination, realising new potential, or uncovering a new identity. There is an exciting tension about working with people who are *on the edge* of such a breakthrough: noticing their approach-avoidance behaviour, inviting them to explore and experiment, playing with metaphorical language and pressing them enough to encourage, and not enough to put them off.

There will nearly always be two dimensions to the work we do together: the outer practical activity of learning the skills of assertiveness or time management; and the inner agenda of becoming a more whole and integrated human being. Some people's expectations only include the former, and may be uncomfortable when the inner agenda emerges, even if they are not personally involved.

Part of my learning as a facilitator has been to find the courage to be more challenging and confrontational. I have sometimes held back too much, and have tried to avoid “upsetting” people, failing to see the positive side of provoking an emotional response. There is a

difference between tipping people gently into their “stuff” in the right circumstances, and pushing them over the edge of an abyss. E is a very different kind of facilitator. If someone contradicts an impression she is getting she will confront them. It looks as if we could both learn from each other.

E: ... Now the trouble I have, and this is because I'm such an opinionated, dogmatic person, is that I don't believe them! [if, for instance, they say they are not angry]

Jill: ... sometimes people are very defensive, yeah? And it's appropriate not to believe them, but how do you square that away with trusting someone and making them feel safe? If you ... say, 'well, I don't believe you'? 'Tis difficult.

E: It's ... because I'm confrontational by nature, ... I just say whatever there is for me to say, ... I think where it comes from is that I try a lot to change them. I want to change them so that they are OK. ... The strength that I have is that I like to get everything out on the table, but when it's overdone, it's like, well maybe it isn't right to get it out on the table ...

Jill: The timing is not yet, like they're not ready ...

E: That's right.

Jill: They need to hide a bit longer before it's safe to come out.

E: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

Jill: And you're in there trying to hook them out!

E: I'm out there trying to get little cracks out, and they're saying no, they don't want to come out yet. That's an area of development for me. ... — really letting people just be.

Taped conversation with E 19th July 1993

Breakthrough into Emotion

I am standing on a stretch of the Dorset coast, high up on the cliff. The waves are pounding on the rocks many (but not even hundreds of) feet below. I am faced with crossing a small split in the cliff. It is only a foot or so across, but I can look through it and see the boiling, dizzying water far below. For me it is an enormous transition. I know that if I were to drop into that gap intentionally, I would not, could not, fall through: my generous hips and bum would jam fast. And yet it is a big step to take. I have to approach and retreat, both mentally and physically, several times. Then with great resolution and resolve, I take a deep breath and my courage in both hands and step across. The stride is three times wider than it needs to be, the breath deep enough to last me several yards. At one and the same time I have progressed a few inches between Swanage and Lulworth, and crossed some divide of fear inside me.

Journal 23rd November 1990

Many students have made transitions across such inner divides. The water represents transition and the emotion that accompanies it, just as crossing water has always been symbolic of new beginnings and spiritual renewal in myths and fairy tales: water separating one territory from another, representing the risk of leaving safe territory before regaining firm ground on the other side; water or emotion rushing through a gap in people's experience. My bridging role is relevant here. From a vantage point on the bridge a person can guide those who want to enter the water; or can lead people over the bridge if they want to keep dry.

Part of the bridging role is creating safety, giving careful attention to detail in providing stepping stones to lead people away from the impersonal everyday toward the possibility of entering the personal and inner world. In this process there is always the option of operating at a factual or at a metaphorical level, of staying on the surface or diving into emotions. Given this permission and the safety, many take the risk of revealing fears, and giving expression to grief and rage that has been long repressed. Breaching such dams of emotion allows an internal transition to be made: a re-connection with the Affective and Imaginal modes of being (Heron 1992) that can have profound long-term effects on how people relate to themselves and others. This was particularly apparent in the multi-national company where I worked. I had ongoing contact with a number of students over several years, and was able to notice and hear about their progress in different contexts.

Shifting Dimensions and Agendas

Some students have been unequivocal about their need to change or achieve something, and have left me in no doubt of their commitment to a personal development agenda. It was a **fully shared agenda**, that is, we were committed to both outer activities and inner growth, and accepted and trusted how work at the outer level could produce shifts at the inner level.

Others have shown **tacit acceptance** of the agenda. These people may have been too diffident to express their acceptance and share their experience; or too busy digesting new experience internally, and not yet ready to discuss it with others. The problem here was that tacit acceptance is often indistinguishable from tacit rejection and is thus a trap for the paranoid facilitator.

A very common reaction is **approach-avoidance**. This usually occurs where there is not yet full acceptance of the inner agenda. Maybe the person is just coming to an awareness that such an agenda is there to be had. Or it may be that he or she wants to grow and change but can't yet commit to the action that needs to be taken to achieve that change. A third possibility is that someone may be fully committed to the inner agenda but does not believe that the activity suggested in the outer agenda is relevant to it.

Presenting the inner agenda

... the outer crossing of thresholds symbolises inner transitions. Inner journeys increasingly demand outer expression, demonstrating commitment to them and needing to be witnessed, but also that outer symbolic activity conjures up, invites, paves the way for, goes to meet, encourages inner movement. Like Acting Into [emotion] in Co-Counselling goes to meet the emotion that needs to find expression and catharsis. Like dipping emotional blotting paper into the psyche.

Journal 11th October 1994

How I hold that inner agenda, and how I present it to the student is important and a matter of delicate balance. It may be fully shared and in the open, but it can only reach that advanced state by a complex and subtle process of invitation, disclosure, exploration, and negotiation. Sometimes this process progresses to a halfway stage of tacit understanding of the agenda, evidenced by flashes of disclosure; sometimes there is a lot of approach-avoidance behaviour: the agenda is sniffed out and greeted with suspicion "are you reading me like a book?", but not rejected. This can involve contradictory statements from the same person or incongruent behaviour.

A facilitator thus has a number of holding, containing, linking and bridging tasks. One task is the provision of consistency and coherence of presentation which can be planned and prepared. This includes mapping the territory, providing signposts and stepping stones, and leading people step by step, remembering that beginners take much smaller steps than seasoned travellers. Invaluable here is the "conversational thread" a practice I have learned from my friend Sara which ensures continuity and coherence by creating links between every part of a group experience as if it were an ongoing conversation, rather like the thread that leads the explorer back out of the maze. This metaphor has interesting echoes in the maze or maypole dances, associated with rebirth, where the dancers trace the pattern of the labyrinth holding ribbons that symbolise umbilical cords connected to the Mother at the centre (Bleakley 1984 p.199).

Another task is the more ad hoc provision of coherence to balance the fragmentation and contradictions people may present. In this role a facilitator may be able to collect and hold the pieces and reflect back the whole. A variation of this role, described by another facilitator, involves being a calm centre:

You're almost saying (as a group member) "can you hold this for a while, our panic, our conventions about life. Something's going on here and we want to explore it. Can you just watch us and keep an eye on us". And that watching brief, and looking-after-us brief isn't very

clearly defined usually. It sounds ever so dependency but I don't think it is. ... a role ... which means "don't come in here with us in terms of our panic."

Taped conversation with A 25th April 1989

Ending

Providing a safe environment, a territory that is marked off as different and special in which students can explore new behaviour and make new connections is important; it is equally important to provide ways of integrating the experience usefully into the rest of life.

Endings need to gather loose ends, draw an experience together, allowing time for reflection, as well as looking ahead to integrate and develop learning. I give students the opportunity to look back over their time together, assess strengths and areas that need further development, and give each other feedback.

Students need preparation for returning to work and explaining their experience to friends, family and partners. Sometimes they meet with hostility when they do this because colleagues and personal partners fear that they will no longer be acceptable or needed, or that the relationship will change in some way. Conveying the quality of the experience is problematic and distortions occur at both personal and organizational levels. Colleagues, managers, and families can misunderstand, may be thrown off balance, or feel betrayed by a person who changes. Their consequent behaviour may be either unconscious and innocent; or manipulative and obstinate, or it may be seen as such. In either case, this is destructive of both those involved, and of the experience itself.

individuals changing their ways of being in the world without due regard to the consensus risk victimization.

Postle 1992

In order to integrate an experience students face a dilemma: of needing both to protect and to share an experience. Preparation of how to communicate the experience and convey the essential quality can reduce the chances of triggering a negative response. Torbert's four territories of communication (Torbert 1995) (framing advocating, illustrating, and inquiring) provide a good structure for such a communication.

In Conclusion

Much transitional work involves helping people to remove compartments and make connections across different parts of life and of the self. In the next chapter I make longitudinal connections along the lines of my personal history, tracing a recurrent pattern which links my earliest experience with my awareness as a facilitator.

Champion of the Men

In this chapter I explore my relationship with men: first with the men I have met in organizations, grouped according to characteristic behaviours they share; secondly with my father, tracing the origins of my responses to men in general back to the earliest origins of that first relationship.

I examine how this has affected my work, and the emergence of "maleness" in me in terms of fire energy.

If I have a pre-occupation it is with men rather than women. This feels a risky admission to make, and raises guilt about "betraying" my own sex which I will explore later. This pre-occupation with men in no way diminishes for me the excitement, warmth and sharing of the work I have done with women, both in mixed and separate groups. My concern for men whom I see as oppressed reflects in part the tensions in the organizations I have worked for, in part the patterns in my own personal history.

This chapter has been incubating certainly since I started my research; since before that when I started facilitating groups in a commercial setting; and less obviously since well before I was born. All of which I have only recently been ready to admit. I remember that when Judi tentatively asked me, during a tutorial session in November 1988, whether gender was not an issue in my research, I rejected this idea defensively. I had already experienced other women facilitators who criticized me for working with men, on the grounds that, as a woman, I should be devoting my attention exclusively to the support and promotion of women working in industry. My response was to say that I was concerned with people, an unhelpful (to me) response because it encouraged me to ignore, or to not notice, the differences.

At that time I had an undifferentiated view of feminism which at some level I knew was insufficient because I experienced conflict and was ill-equipped to deal with comments such as "you're not turning into one of those women's libbers, are you?", or older male course participants who checked that I wouldn't get angry if they opened the door for me. These questions begged so many other questions which made me uncomfortable that I avoided proper answers. Eventually however, I had to address that question, recognizing that of course gender is an issue, both in my research and in my work. A later chapter (Chapter 14), which explores how men and women interact and communicate, includes an overview of some feminist perspectives which helped to raise my awareness and develop my thinking about issues I could no longer ignore.

In this chapter I will first briefly set out the problem I experience with men I meet through my work; and explore the origins of these behaviour patterns in my own development.

Meeting Men in Organizations

I was alerted to the need to explore this relationship with men by noticing a number of men who seemed as oppressed by organizations as women. I have used a number of shorthands to describe the loose groupings of men who have characteristics in common. An individual man may fall into more than one of the groups, or may travel between groups. Most individuals do not fit neatly into any one group, but a dominant aspect of behaviour may lead me to perceive them in a particular way. I see traces of these stereotypes among students who come on courses I am facilitating; among men I meet during consultancy work; among fellow eaters of business lunches; and in audiences where I am speaking. The categories do not refer to how I think these men "really are". They refer to how I see their behaviour at the point of the mutual encounter between them and me. The point of encounter involves me in giving, and them in hearing, information about my work. At a talk I might be outlining my research; at a lunch I might be explaining what my company is and does; on a course I would be summarising the content and process of the course, and the principles and philosophy behind it. I have named the groups the MIDS, the Nomads, the Cynics, and the Grads, and describe them as follows:

MIDS

I have called the first phenomenon the Men in Dark Suits (MIDS) — embattled men who are at home in the organization and uncomfortable dealing with feelings.

The MIDS phenomenon was the first to appear, as early as 1986 during my first experiences of working as a trainer. Here are some notes written about it for the first time about a year later. The abbreviation HSKE refers to The Human Side of Knowledge Engineering which was a partly technical course which I developed and co-taught, and which involved helping technical people to interact effectively with people rather than machines, and to engage with qualitative, rather than quantitative data.

Just writing this makes me keen to introduce more of the feelings bit into the next HSKE course — the fear is about being written off as woolly or weird or womanish or wet and not being able to JUSTIFY. A cry of JUSTIFY/CRUCIFY rings in my head! But now I think I can justify, and show the relevance, — and that they ignore it at their peril. ...

There's the dark suit syndrome which makes it difficult/outrageous to talk to men in dark suits about feelings.

... the HSKE course revealed something about this problem I have: they are all sitting there dark-suited and white-shirted and tidy, trying to learn about this messy human activity called

And that gives way to a fantasy where I am sitting on the floor in the middle of this group of men in dark suits, like a child, with my legs apart showing my knickers, covered in mud, jam on my face, yelling. Utterly gross, crude and ridiculous. And they watch with distaste, all elegant, and wait for me to go away.

Journal June 1987

A similar experience is shared in a dialogue with a woman training co-ordinator:

Sue: I do spend an awful lot of my time sitting in meetings where I am the only woman. People besuited in their uniform which is also their defence, which is also the badge of office. And the body language absolutely slays me most of the time. — Um, um, you can't start hugging men in suits without getting arrested.

Taped conversation 25-05-89

Both points of view are echoed in the rules of corporate success as observed by Sam Keen. One of them is *Wear the uniform*:

Success makes drab. The higher you rise in the establishment the more colorless you become, the more you dress like an undertaker or a priest

Keen 1992 p 63

Keen is scathing about the necktie — “*demonically designed to exile the head from the body and restrain all deep and passionate breath*”. This description echoes Heron's description of the precipitated ego operating only at head level in the practical mode. It brings to mind the astonished look of an accountant client who was having difficulty projecting his voice, when I told him to go out and buy some bigger shirts, since his voice was literally strangled. Another of Keen's rules states that “*Nobody hugs the boss*” which accompanies the principle of keeping distance and avoiding friendship.

When invited to examine the relevance of emotions, imagination, or interpersonal relationships to work, the MIDS display rejection, — wariness, suspicion, and inability to cope — which tends to produce paralysis in me. They have so organized their thoughts and feelings inside their suits that they experience no anxiety and conflict within the organization; it is only in the more open culture of a development group that they feel uncomfortable. The result is a numbness in the chest area which Bly describes as a decision *to have no feelings at all* (Bly 1990 p68), so that when a man looks into his chest to see what his feelings are, he sees nothing.

The DD Syndrome

A related phenomenon among women in organizations is the **DD syndrome** which I first encountered in New York in late 1986, where I met a group of women who turned out to be the female equivalent of the MIDS. This was during an offering of the knowledge engineering course described above. We were pleased to find that at least a third of the class were women (in the UK we would be lucky to get more than one woman in a class of 16 people), but were soon confronted by our assumption that the women would give support to the intuitive, right-brain ways of working which we were suggesting. They responded angrily and defensively, and it became apparent that they had long ago put away such traditionally “womanish” things in order to be sure of succeeding in the male world which they had chosen. Our insistence that they unlock their personal Pandora’s boxes was perceived as a threat likely to throw them off balance in their survival strategy. Their suits were not dark, but pastel coloured or white, with knife-edge trouser creases, and their ties were arranged in neat bows, but the DDs (after the initials of their leading spokeswoman) had much in common with the MIDS, both in what they did and in the effect it had on me.

Nomads

These are gentle men who feel oppressed by the organization, have never felt at home there, who are still searching, either consciously or unconsciously, and see a course as an oasis in the desert. They have the makings of the pilgrims Keen talks about embarking on a quest which may as yet lack direction but which becomes ever clearer.

I experience a great need to notice and nurture the qualities of the Nomads

I want to write about the men I see on the courses I run in X company. Men who are gentle, shy, defended sometimes, frightened, unassertive, puzzled, frustrated, angry, needing to cry, not knowing how to handle their hurt child.

Journal June 30th 1989

A later journal entry, prompted by reading an exploratory paper of Judi Marshall's, looks more closely at the position of these men.

Looking out over dramatically changeable extremes of weather on the Firth of Clyde – one moment distant snow-capped mountains with the sun lighting them; the next no Holy Loch, no Clyde, no foreshore. Wind whistling constantly, and every so often violent horizontal hailstorm.

Reading Judi's research proposal ... – thinking of the difficulty women have with alien organizations, and thinking of the difficulty men have ditto. And thinking that in some ways it is more difficult for men. If you are a woman in a male-dominated organization, and promote the

case of equality for women, then that involves risk and discomfort. If you are a man, who shares the same values as this woman, and feels oppressed by the organization, and you support the same cause, you may be regarded with suspicion by both sides, but your pain will not be taken seriously. As a man it is considered easy for you to survive. Clearly you won't be held back for being a woman, but if you openly espouse female values then you may well be penalised. On top of all that you have an identity crisis, and don't know how to handle your maleness.

...

If I look at men's experience in this field, because that is what I see, it produces another dimension of complication — not only are the men likely to experience splitness, suspicion from both sides etc., but I as researcher have a sense of betraying, or being seen to betray my own sex by supporting the men in their struggle in the same direction.. As if on a sinking ship when the watchword is "women and children first", I am caught in the act of loading a group of men into a lifeboat.

Journal March 24th 1990

The Nomads cause me no conflict in relating to them. They show acceptance — a hunger and thirst for what they see on offer, — which reassures and energizes me. They have needs which they are clearly trying to articulate, and we are both moving openly in the same direction. I experience no anxiety or conflict in our mutual encounter. They find relief from the anxiety and conflict they experience in the organization outside of the group, hence the sense of the group as oasis. It is only in *discussion* of the Nomads with others that conflict arises. I frequently find myself out of step with other women in the discussion, because I am noticing this group of men who seem to me to suffer as much as women in the gender struggle. Judi's reference to me during a discussion in the Bath Research Group as the "champion of the men" describes the position I often find myself in, and which I also describe as being on the "wrong side of the fence".

Reflecting on how I arrived on the so-called wrong side of this so-called fence in a number of separate discussions, I notice that I did not set out to take sides, only to express what I thought and felt. As a result I noticed that the people agreeing with me tended to be male, and the people disagreeing, sometimes heatedly, tended to be female. Not all of them perceived a fence, although some were keen to erect one. The perception of being on the wrong side came from me.

In spite of the discomfort I don't want to surrender that position; rather I want to be free to move between positions. Many people do see such a gender fence, and I think it is important for people on both sides of it to hear that men are suffering too. It is also important for both

sides to notice who is saying it. But what is more important is that a communication results in which both women and men can learn to understand the nature of each others pain, and move towards an *and-and* position rather than the *either-or* of fence-like divisions. Sam Keen contributes his experience of the burden of being a man *"living with the expectation of being a battlefield sacrifice"*, which resonates with the lifeboat metaphor of my guilt described above.

In the old war code, warriors were expendable but women and children were to be protected behind the shield. Granted, the sanctity of innocence was violated ... The point is: no one even suggested that men's lives have a claim to the sanctity and protection afforded, in theory, to women and children. It is wrong to kill women and children but men are legitimate candidates for systematic slaughter — cannon fodder.

Keen 1992 p46

Cynics

Cynics are often but not always, older men who may once have been MIDS, and who may be disguised as MIDS, who are disillusioned because their efforts on behalf of the organization went unrecognized, or their individuality was viewed as subversive; or ex-Nomads who never found an oasis, and have therefore come to believe that every oasis is a mirage.

One subset of Cynics are probably in their mid to late forties onward, and appear to be the male equivalent of the "women who leave" who are the focus of Judi Marshall's recent research (Marshall 1995). These are women who have progressed well in the organization, but appear to stop short of completing a successful career. This may be because they encounter the "glass ceiling" which prevents most women from progressing beyond a certain point in a company, or it may be that they feel unable to continue to subscribe to the values of the organization because they conflict with their life values. These two reasons may of course be intertwined, but the second reason is one which may also affect men. Men, however, find themselves in a rather different position. Particularly for the age group in question it is much less socially and economically acceptable for men simply to leave, although recent competition for redundancy packages show that there are many who would like to. One alternative for this group is a psychological rather than a physical leave-taking, a retreat into the position of Cynic.

In contrast, cynical young men are often not yet true Cynics, but closet Nomads using cynicism as a cover for their Nomadic activities. Sometimes a personal development course may be the opportunity for them to "come out".

If the company does not find a way of engaging the energy of young potential cynics, they may leave in search of a more congenial environment or join the ranks of the older Cynics.

Grads

Another, overlapping, group I have called the Grads — young men of two sorts, **Frustrated Grads** usually recent graduate recruits who are the cream of creative intelligence, energy and enthusiasm, and find their creativity being stifled, and are at risk of becoming cynics or leaving the company.

I am noticing a worrying phenomenon in X company among young and promising men. It may apply to women too but I have only noticed it in men. They find the atmosphere stultifying both to their professional creativity and to their personal need to interact in a relaxed way at work.

Either they develop an increasingly cynical attitude – giving their work little in the way of their energy and enthusiasm, and holding all that for outside work:

"Work is just a job to finance leisure pursuits."

"I'm a different person at home and at work."

"Never mix work and home."

"Don't take work home. Don't socialize at work."

"It's not OK to express any sort of emotion. Feelings are inappropriate."

"If you make a joke, you're frowned upon"

Or, they leave the company, go to another, often smaller company where they can have more direct involvement, responsibility, and personal reward, and where creativity is used and valued, or set up on their own, often selling their skills back to X.

I see this process as part of a vicious spiral which is steadily impoverishing the company.

People smother their humanity in order to survive. This makes the workplace even worse, so they smother it more, give less, and work becomes steadily less attractive and the person increasingly cynical.

Journal 13th July 1991

This pattern appears in a conversation with G, another trainer:

G: I'm not sure that I spotted patterns, but – couple of experiences where young people were new in the organization, and they were in the stage of being repressed by the organization, because they were having to suppress all their natural energies, all their ideas, into the stage of conforming. Then later on they either had conformed and come to terms with it, or were rebelling against it. I found that a lot of young people were either fighting hard against that repression, or were feeling it weighing heavy. Like you said, it was turgid, I've often experienced it as being a deadening type of effect. You see the shoulders go down, and the

faces come down. ... there's a lot of energy there, maybe even more so, because so repressed. It may be anger, or it may be excitement energy, having the chance to plan. It's unlocking that when it's not OK for it to be unlocked where they work. Barrier to get over. ...

G: ... organizations, they are very left-brained. Rules, structures, one of the ways people get repressed, and their creativity and energy and child-like qualities are often neglected, held in. Like people are channelled.

Tape-recorded conversation with G 3rd May 1989

Sometimes the repressed energy seems to combine with feelings of embarrassment particularly in young men on personal development courses whose legs start to twitch as potentially uncomfortable topics are discussed. It is not unusual for one leg to be pumping away at about twice the normal pulse rate with the owner apparently oblivious. Sometimes a whole row of legs will be moving in sympathy with one another, maybe expressing embarrassment, or physical restlessness, or oppression by another of the rules of corporate success described by Keen:

The world is run largely by sedentary males. The symbol of power is the chair. ... As a general rule those who stay indoors and move the least make the most money. ...men don't get ahead by moving their bodies.

Keen 1992 p 63

The following journal entry in 1990 shows that I seemed to keep re-discovering this pattern.

Not taking work home is fine. So is not bringing personal problems to work. What is not fine is the split personality which can sometimes result. ... the person who is sensitive and caring, fun-loving and humorous at home leaves that vulnerable, creative side behind, and operates on a rational, analytical, bottom line level at work. So work suffers and becomes unrewarding. ... I worry about the schizophrenic existence and the stresses it produces later on. And I worry even more that the attitude behind this impoverishes the working environment and ensures that stress later. It sez I can't afford to be a human being at work. I must keep all my loving and caring and fun and humour and imagination for home.

Journal 20th October 1990

The cumulative effect of this attitude going unchallenged, and of numbers of such people rising to positions of power in corporations has frightening implications for the planet. Just such a divorce has caused our current ecological crisis.

I'm all right Jack Grads — these are the other group of graduates who have apparently never had a hiccup in their lives, have no crises of confidence, and find it difficult to

recognise the degree to which other people can lack confidence, let alone empathize with them. A personal development course can be a revelation to them. A conversation with me over lunch is reported:

C had an interesting Ugghh! which turned into an Ahh! on the course when watching the video of the women who were reduced to tears by put-downs which he considered funny, and of the sort he frequently uses. It was something of a breakthrough for him to realize that not everyone is so unemotional as him, and that such comments could be hurtful when he least intended it.

Journal 20th October 1990

C didn't "believe" the upset and tears of the women on the video. At one level he recognized it as documentary evidence from people who were not acting; at another level he didn't find it credible, and wanted to think these women were in some ways exceptions to the rule. He could not, however, ignore the overwhelming corroboration of the women in the room with him that this was also their experience, and he found that deeply confronting. Meeting C again two years and another baby later, I had the impression that he had taken the lesson to heart with good results for his relations with colleagues, for his career, and for his family.

At this point it feels appropriate to ask why or how I came to be seen and to see myself as champion of the men. I own the role but also need to question and explore it. Is it compulsive? Is it also useful, valid? I will first ask the sort of "why?" which looks back at antecedents and causes, and expects the answer "because ..." Then I will examine the purpose of the role by asking "why?" and looking for the answer "in order to ..."

This theme of taking the male "side", and experiencing guilt or confusion is mirrored in my childhood family, a pattern uncovered through co-counselling sessions; and I have traced its origins as far back as conception by examining a guided fantasy experienced during a workshop on birthwork and related experiences. The spiral-to-the-centre of this particular thread is particularly clear to see.

Conception and Personal Myth

I will start at the centre of the spiral and follow the thread through the maze of conception, birth and childhood, and out into the more open spaces of present day relationships.

The conception myth which I find myself carrying begins in an open space of a different kind, a cosmic arena beyond the world we know and into which we were born. I discovered it on a birthwork workshop run by William Emerson which felt particularly auspicious for me since it took place exactly between my birth *date* and my birth *day* which was Easter Saturday, an interesting piece of synchronicity.

Everything about William's guided conception fantasy took me by surprise. Birthwork I had done many times, and the idea of accessing in utero memories before that stretched my imagination; but to go back to a point before conception? Ironically my reaction at the prospect reminded me of how my father would have reacted — with vigorous scepticism. How valid could such "data" be? After all they could only be coming from inside my head. But isn't that true of all memories? They are my reconstructed perception of events, and may be quite different from other people's perception of the same events.

After the experience such accuracy or "truth" did not seem to be the issue. My scepticism dissolved in the face of the powerful images that came to me, and demanded attention. They seemed to provide a unifying thread of coherence to pieces of a pattern that had previously seemed random and disconnected. On reflection they appeared to have influenced my whole way of being, perceiving, and behaving subsequently in my life. The images arose from physical sensations which seemed good evidence that, as with other birthwork, these "memories" do not come from the head but from the body. Emerson's claim to "read" birth position and trauma from posture and to use that information effectively in therapy clearly supports that view. If the body does not carry them, then the mind is immensely quick to invent them, and must have good reason to do so.

An alternative or additional perspective is that these memories of the body are reconstructed *in the context of* what is currently happening in the adult psyche. Thus there is a dynamic interaction between past and present; mind (imaginal mode) and body (affective mode); and this then interpreted by mind (conceptual mode).

What I experienced during the fantasy was a state of extended euphoria on the journey from the spirit world that was wondrous and thrilling and which I believe was the source of a recurrent nightmare I had as a child. It is as if the memory survived in the nightmare in residual form, but, probably because of what happened at the end of the journey (see below), the recurrent dream was not euphoric, and the thrill turned to a terror that I would fragment and spin forever in endless space. The dream re-appeared in adulthood in a flying phobia in which my experience of take-off seemed to reproduce the sensations, visual images, and terror of the nightmare. It is the continuous psychic thread of this imaginal experience that, to me, gives authenticity and credibility to the notion of the conception fantasy, convincing me that, unlikely as it might seem, it has some sort of reality. That is, it not only carries meaning for me, but demonstrates some sort of coherence of psychic development that has relevance to my work, and be meaningful to others.

The key message from the conception fantasy was that I identified strongly and entirely with the journeying (male) part of myself, while rejecting the receiving (female) part. It was a joy and excitement to be something as lively and dynamic as the wriggly, fiery sperm. But the

euphoria was short-lived, and fertilisation brought the *destruction of sperm fire*, and an overwhelming sense of loss.

Sense of energy of being a sperm. Going for it. Excitement. ... Fertilisation is a disaster. The egg is cold. ... Stopped dead. In my tracks. Frozen. Like I'm in an ice-cube.

Journal 11th April 1990

The feminine in the shape of the ice-cube is not the receptive element of the archetypal feminine as I understand it, associated with water, the moon, the mysteries of darkness and the earth, birth and menstruation, through which women have access to the ancient wisdom and healing power of the earth. Here the only one of those ingredients I find is water, and it is frozen and static. It is a source of pain, disappointment, and shame at the core of my womanliness. Echoes of "ice maiden", and "frigid" chill through me.

As an incubator, the ice-cube was as comforting as a vast empty waiting room, only becoming warm and containing with the onset of labour. Thus the contractions felt comforting rather than a signal to exit, throwing light on my reluctance to be born.

This "experience" did not leave me wishing I had been a boy. I was a very female girl, and boys were identified with the one who broke my china doll, and tried to hang me; they were loud and rough and in the majority of people chasing me with stinging nettles at school. The issue is not of gender identity, but that I seemed to lack the fiery energy both then and now, and developed an early pattern of being easily stopped or dowsed, and becoming an easy victim.

The Child Behind the Bamboo

In this section I describe my *perception* of the dynamic between me and my mother and father. It is not an account of "how it was". "How it was" is too elusive a concept to capture, differing according to the point of view of each of us, and shifting like the patterns in a kaleidoscope in response to outside influences, both then and now, tricks of memory and imagination; and the quality of self-awareness and process-awareness present in the person doing the remembering. Thus the cameos of my father are *descriptions of memories* of childhood experiences viewed through an adult lens looking back about 40 years. As such they are probably more fantasy than fact although the experiences were nevertheless formative.

In writing about this, I am tracing how I became what I am, and how I learned to understand that process and its relevance to my current work. I am claiming that there is immense value to be gained in exploring past history in this way, for I see the process of understanding personal history as a process of taking responsibility for self, both for what I have inherited and for how I choose to develop that self.

This takes me a long way from the early temptation of wanting to blame my parents for all my faults (whilst retaining the credit for my qualities!). The last thing I want to do is to blame them or cause them pain, partly because I both love and respect them; partly because I now know how impossible it is to "get it right" in the role of parent; and partly for practical, developmental reasons. Understanding a piece of behaviour without judgement as simply my response to them allows me to own it, let go of it, and move on; but claiming that my poor behaviour was their fault, would leave me believing that it was, and still is, in their control, and would lock me in to the victim position.

Finally by way of introducing this section, I want to say that it focuses on difficulties which were a small part of a relatively trouble free and happy childhood. I say this partly to get the balance right, but also to emphasise the right of people who had such normal childhoods to have problems and explore them. It is an experience I have in common with some others that, compared with people who had traumatic early histories, we are supposedly too lucky to even mention our problems. "Normal" is difficult and interesting too, because life and people are difficult and interesting.

My understanding of the relevance of the conception fantasy described in the previous section is that the "stopped" pattern it seemed to originate produced a compliant child whose rage smouldered under a blanket of sulking; and an adult who stifled the impulse to excel, to lead, to be creative, or to ask for what she wanted, for fear of being wrong, pushy, ridiculous, or selfish. It worked so well that the impulse itself was eventually not detectable.

My early years were spent in the company mainly of my mother, and her mother and sisters who, although survivors, strong personalities, and to some extent powerful within the family, did not assert themselves in the company of the men or aspire to make a mark in the outside world. My mother had aspirations and talent but they appeared to fade, or be put aside.

My father's absence at sea during this time gained him an aura of mystery and excitement building up to a hero's welcome home of this person I didn't really know or recognise. A contrasting memory is of the absolute reassurance and acceptance he gave me when he regularly rescued me from a recurrent nightmare. I never really understood why he was the only one who could really comfort me on those nights, when at other times I was such a Mummy's girl. Now I notice that the nightmare was the one that linked back to the conception fantasy, and forward to my flying phobia in adulthood.

It strikes me that it was much easier to be clear about both the negative and the positive memories of my father than about those concerning my mother. The good memories of father were all good, and the bad memories unequivocally bad, whereas the mother-memories were muddier, more confused, and could not be separated one from the other. The positive side of my father appeared in the hero and the nocturnal rescuer; the negative side was sulky, impatient, insensitive, mocking. With my mother the negative was, as it

were, stuck to the underside of the positive, so that even the best memories were contaminated by the retrospective knowledge of how disabled I was by the cocoon of cosiness which, with the best intentions, she spun around the two of us.

Winning my mother's approval was not an issue, although learning to do without it was later to become a very big issue. When I was small our lives were a web of shared rituals which it must have been hard to penetrate, even for a returning hero. She told the stories, and I listened; she baked the cakes and I scraped the bowls; she sewed the dresses and I wore them. We protected each other from the world by pretending it wasn't there, colluding to preserve the myth of a conflict-free relationship of the good girl and the good mother. Her control was subtle or even manipulative, rather than openly authoritative. Nevertheless it was a safe place to be, surrounded by love and familiarity, the only forfeits being that I shouldn't think for myself or have tantrums, and the good girl found that easy enough.

My father's presence as I grew older brought awareness that I was a feeble creature. In an attempt to encourage me he laughed at my physical clumsiness and fear of things "out there", mimicked my wail of "I didn't think" every time I failed to do so, and constantly exhorted me to use my non-existent initiative. I could hide in mother's cocoon of course but now it felt stifling and shameful. We could have done with our hero earlier to protect her from, and connect me to, the world.

I don't remember my parents having rows: my memory is of periods of thunderous sulking from my father, and of nagging resentment from my mother. Voices were not so much raised as steeled, but silence was the main feature, cut by the occasional door slamming as the protagonists increased the distance between them.

It was problematic supporting my father — he was always "out there" doing something cold and dirty in the garden, while I would be "in the warm" with my mother doing something domestic. It seemed unthinkable that it should be otherwise. Similarly she would assume I was on her side, including me in comments designed to mock his behaviour or activities. Sometimes I identified with my father, and wanted to be on his side of our triangle, but then he seemed to go to such lengths to be unkind to my mother that I would feel obliged to support her, and guilty of desertion.

It is Sunday and I am helping my mother who is peeling potatoes. We are both looking through the little square window over the sink and watching, but not mentioning, the sullen, statue-like figure rooted with its back to us in the vegetable garden. The set of the head and the neck, the arms akimbo, the sullen bottom, all radiate waves of bad temper back towards the house. The day will wade on through lunch, lurch into the torpor of the Sunday papers, and emerge into grudging conversation at tea-time.

This pattern seems to repeat itself — in debates about gender issues I find myself on the “wrong” side, in agreement with the men, and feeling that I am “letting the side down” by “betraying” my own sex. The experience is one of being torn, just as I felt between my parents.

Another memory shows me the statue from the other side.

I am playing behind the bamboo right up against the high brick wall. I am not hiding exactly, just inhabiting my own world. But now it is spoilt. The statue has arrived and planted itself right in line with my hiding place. I must stay quite still and silent, and then he won't know I'm here even though he seems to be looking right at me. What I'm seeing is a physiology right up to its axles in deep sulk: jaw set, corners of the mouth pulled in with irritation, neck cricked back in angry folds, slitty eyes. I feel engulfed in sulphurous fumes, invaded in my world, yet reluctant to escape for fear of invading his world and incurring embarrassment. So I freeze among the smooth bamboo sticks in the rich shade of those red-green leaves until time and the statue eventually move on.

A picture of me emerges that is frozen in the moment, constantly watching, and never proactive. Like the rabbit in the headlights, I failed to see the possibility of jumping to one side or the other, experiencing conflict and paralysis rather than freedom of choice. I didn't think to transcend that conflict by asking “what do I want?” or feel able to inhabit my world behind the bamboo regardless of that other presence. This is the pattern which has been most limiting in my role as facilitator and relates directly to the MIDS syndrome. The MIDS represent the statue gazing on the bamboo, exhibiting signs of anger and exasperation which is in no way directed at the hidden child; but the child feels threatened, and the woman falters and loses touch with her truth, her world. A passage entitled *Feeling a Fake in Rio* describes this:

This is primarily to do with my distress when I get caught thinking that I am a fraud, and shouldn't be there at all; that what I have to offer is trivial, homespun, and belongs in the privacy of the back kitchen, where it just might seem important. It has no place trying to find a place in the outside world. That is just laughable, and it makes me ridiculous.

Writings 27th July 1988

The child behind the bamboo was not seeking approval or shrinking from disapproval. She was voluntarily cancelling herself out, invalidating her experience, so that the issue of approval or disapproval would not arise. But in other situations she was a compliant child, depending heavily on the approval of others, which led to paralysis as she fell between the two stools of her parents' conflicting needs of her.

I've just seen the double bind ... My father ... laughed at me for not being competent at Maths, not being able to throw or catch a ball, run, jump; for being afraid. And my mother rewarded me for the same because she made a virtue out of those incompetences. In fact she seduced me into not trying to succeed, because that was a betrayal of "us" who were unathletic, a-political, unintelligent "bears of little brain", women.

... Risk of trying and pleasing father too great — if I fail I get laughed at even more. Meanwhile ... seduced into mocking the things I'd like to be good at. Sport, singing, maths, athletics. My mother clowning her incompetence and making me an accomplice against silly men!

Journal 12th May 1989

My father was embarrassed by emotions. I can see him now, sitting back in an armchair with his legs crossed. Just an allusion to feeling by someone within earshot was enough to set off a recognisable physiological reaction. His head jerks back and to the left, and eyes narrow as he concentrates exclusively on lining up the toe of his upper foot with the cross bars on the window frame, using his other leg to rock the upper leg up and down as necessary. Caught without his legs crossed he will resort to lining up anything with anything beyond the window. My mother and I used the shorthand "garden eyes" for this whole gestalt, and looking at it now, it seems like a variation of the young men of the twitching legs on personal development courses.

Looking back at those images with the benefit of hindsight and more information, I see my father as frozen too, trapped by his need to find some expression for his frustration, and a family history of temper that made that expression an unacceptable option. From great grandfather who was a preacher and physically violent; through grandfather who was so gentle with me but a verbally abusive tyrant at home; through the suppressed anger of my father; to me, my problem expressing anger, my early sulking, and my current thesis; and on to my daughter who has chosen to attend to the undiscussibles in our family before she and her brothers take them into the next generation.

I see now that there were no rights or wrongs, that there is no blame to be apportioned, just people doing the best they could. It helps to talk about it and share perspectives. The few risks I have taken of this sort have been well rewarded, as when I decided to describe to my father what I do for a living by talking him through a personal development course. I was dismayed to find that he was lost and incredulous at my account of the introductions as he would not have considered these necessary. It took some courage to continue but it turned out to be a breakthrough of communication and afterwards I wrote him a letter. I never sent it but the quality of our relationship has continued to improve.

Champion of the Men

So how do I get from being paranoid about MIDS to being champion of the men?

At a purely personal level I see overcoming my paranoia as part of my ongoing attempt to win my father's approval. Or rather, it is more than that. My aim is to transcend that need and see myself as a peer of others (including him) who hold different opinions. In fact the whole exercise of trying to write a "watery" PhD about feminine knowing and get it accepted by the patriarchal academic system, mirrors that same struggle.

Another aspect of this is my dogged attempt to see the good, almost to prove the good in everyone. Here again the determination rests on my need to prove that my father was okay, to support his corner of the triangle, and to mediate his point of view with the other corner in order to restore harmony.

I believe that the role of champion of the men is an integral and essential part of the facilitation task that I undertake. I think that my struggle around this subject gives me an insight into, and an understanding of, the dilemma of men, which is useful in providing some men in a particular context with a kind of initiation into their own emotional, sexual, or spiritual awareness. I am finding that the process works in two directions. By working *with* my difficult history I am healing not only my own wounds, but also the relationships involved. Feelings and insights begin to trickle back and forth along disused arteries of the psyche, just as when doing yoga, I breathe into discomfort in my limbs and feel the muscles relax, and the circulation increase.

This healing effect was certainly not one I expected or considered possible. My motivation was to give the men I encountered permission to uncover, own, and express the gentle parts of themselves, and to get to know their emotions. That was the first "in order to" reason that emerged, and was soon followed by a recognition of the need to "humanise" the organization. I began to see that not only did the men need this release, but that both men and women were failing to thrive in some parts of the organization because of the impoverished emotional climate. In these departments there were almost no warm, living relationships, mainly because the people at the top, almost exclusively male managers, did not feel comfortable with emotions. At the same time, senior managers were noticing with concern the declining creativity and productivity of the company, and seeking ways to reverse it. The absence of emotional currency appeared to be gradually starving the organization to death.

Thus the "in order to" question spirals out in ever-widening arcs, starting with individual men, extending to departments of men and women, embracing the organization as a whole, spreading to industry and commerce in general, and finally encircling the planet which is

threatened by our profit motivation and lack of connectedness with our emotions, our bodies and our real survival needs which are rooted in the earth. So it turns out that a great deal can hang on the initiation of individual men. It is a way of sending out small ripples of influence which may encounter other and larger ripples which may in turn create waves.

Robert Bly (1990) recounts the initiation story of Iron John. In Grimm's fairy story, Iron John, the ancient, hairy and primitive Wild Man, is found in the bottom of a lake (under the water of the soul), and is imprisoned in the King's courtyard. The King's son loses his golden ball into the cage of the Wild Man and can only have it if he lets the Wild Man free. The key to the cage is under the Queen's pillow, and when, on the third time of asking, the King's son eventually finds out where the key is hidden, and lets the Wild Man out of the cage, he goes with him into the woods rather than face the anger of his father. Thus starts his journey of initiation into manhood by a route that Bly sees as an alternative and viable solution for modern men. It rejects both the one-sided macho man of the fifties, and the soft man of the seventies who lacks passion, and seeks reconnection with a more fundamental energy.

PA, a superficially energetic and extrovert student experienced a cathartic breakthrough on the personal awareness course he attended. In one of the letters he wrote afterwards he described it as an emotional initiation:

The reason I write to you is that I believe the personal awareness course was my initiation ceremony. ... Someone (or some ethereal thing) had had enough, and decided some heavy prodding and prodigious poking was in order, and the course was all that, plus a grounding in Love too. ... I believe the expression of true emotion can be the only way of releasing/recognizing self, which ... for me must ultimately be acceptance and expression of Love. Ergo, taking a course which involves a high degree of self-expression is a catalyst in the process of reaching Love

Letter from P Autumn 1989

T was another course participant who thanked me for the *profound effect* of the course in helping him to change his vision of himself. He told me at the end of the course that I had given him permission to be a gentle man. He had never stepped into his male identity because he could not identify with the macho warrior, and needed to hear that gentleness is also a masculine quality, and not "silly". In a letter he wrote

my childhood was filled with my parents telling me "don't be so silly", — the words are still echoing about in my head.

Letter from T 25th January 1989

Sam Keen writes:

I am as much a man when I am being tender as when I am fierce

Keen 1992 p214

and:

It still takes gentleness and fierceness to make a whole man

Keen 1992 p48

T did not have the ability to be fierce, but all the time he believed that gentleness was not manly he was blocked from owning any gender identity. My guess is that having the permission to be gentle may also allow him one day to find his fierce side and make the next step of the transition. Bly describes the seventies "soft male", the new men who *"write poetry and go out and sit by the ocean"*. He values them and welcomes the process of men awakening to their feminine consciousness, while at the same time noticing that it is not enough.

But many of these men are not happy. You quickly notice the lack of energy in them. They are life-preserving but not exactly life-giving. Ironically, you often see these men with strong women who positively radiate energy.

Bly 1990 p. 3

P was a dapper trendy young man, highly intellectual, who studied for fun and made a science of any sport he played. His matter of fact description of the way he set rules and issued instructions for his wife to obey attracted shocked confrontation from the whole group which broke through his self-satisfied logic. He worked very hard, examining his feelings for the first time, which was a revelation to him. He told us on the last day that he was glad to have had the experience before becoming a parent, as he thought he had been on track to be a terrible father. He wrote that *"everyone should do this very enlightening course"*, a remarkable comment from such a task and technically oriented person.

So, from being champion of the men, I now appear as initiator of men. But what is this initiation? For the men described above and for many others it certainly seemed to be about releasing the Wild Man of emotions and sensuality from the cage, recovering the golden ball of radiance, or wholeness. For some men it is finding an emotional voice, an equivalent experience to the sound of silence breaking (see Chapter 14) in women. And what is my part in it, given that I am a woman? Bly definitively states that I, as a woman, shouldn't be doing it. The golden ball belongs to the Wild Man, *"in the magnetic field of the deep masculine. ...protected by the instinctive one who's underwater"*... I respect Bly's analysis, and would be inclined to bow out, embarrassed and apologetic. But that would be to trivialise the issue and

to treat it as if I had stumbled into the gentlemen's toilet by mistake. It would not honour the experience of the men I meet or the value of the role I play.

The possibilities are that I am wrong and shouldn't do what I do; or that Bly and the story are wrong; or that I am a different sort of woman from the queen in the story or the civilising influence to which Bly refers; or simply that I am better than nothing, I am there, but that a man would be better. But not just any man. Not a "nice" man, but a wise and wild man. A wise and wild woman would be better than a nice man.

Another possibility is that there is a need for two initiations, one by a woman, and one by a man. Both Bly and Keen stress the importance of separation from the mother or "Woman" as the first step of male initiation. But in order for this separation to take place there has first to be connection. Where that is missing, there needs to be a primary initiation, by a woman, into the world of emotional wholeness, which must take place before the initiation by the wild man into manhood. Where did the golden ball originally come from? Who gave it to the boy? Was it not his mother? And without the ball there is no initiation by Iron John; the wild man stays in his cage because he has nothing to bargain with. Is not the golden ball a symbol for the enchantment and wholeness of childhood, the connection with body knowledge, imagination, the earth as mother, in other words with Heron's participative modes?

The fierceness of The Wild Man, Iron John, has the energy which comes from a deep connection of body, psyche, and spirit, which is very different from the violence which springs from fragmentation, fear of the body and the emotions, and ignorance of the connection between the sacred and the sexual, all of which are represented in the ego which is cut off in the practical mode.

How does the need for this first initiation come about? Is it that these men never had a golden ball, or does the corporate environment so wipe the memory of it from their minds that they no longer recognize or see it?

In the seventies there was a saying among employees of a certain multi-national company, that it was necessary to sell your soul to the company in order to get on. Their joking carried a lot of pain, anxiety, and grief as these men looked back and then forwards on their lives:

Have the best and brightest men of our time had their souls broken and bent to make them successful?

Keen 1992 p61

Keen describes the combat fatigue which comes as the result of working in the war zone environment of the corporation:

... businessmen who live for years within an atmosphere of low-intensity warfare begin to exhibit the personality traits of the warrior. They become disillusioned and numb to ethical issues; they think only of survival and grow insensitive to pain.

Keen 1992 p61

Maybe the need is for release rather than initiation. A release just as much from Heron's ever-decreasing spiral of the socialisation and education systems, as from the straitjacket of the organization; a release into feelings which have been locked away from the time the small child was told that "big boys don't cry". It is a letting go of being "grown-up" in all the negative and constraining senses of that word; a re-connecting with the rich child-like, flowing, emotional, and sensual knowledge which gets lost in a competitive environment. The climate for souls is missing or polluted for many children; the climate which was traditionally created and maintained by women, and which honoured the earth, the elements, and the seasons; the body, the emotions, and the relationship needs of human beings.

So many factors — the media, computer games, advertising, invade the home, and if the parents are not strong enough in their gender or soul identity to act appropriately as filters, and create an oasis of clean air, the soul of a child doesn't get to breath. What if the mother as well as the father is working in just such an environment which Keen describes, and comes home with the symptoms of battle fatigue, "*disillusioned and numb to ethical issues*"? What if there is no father, and the mother is torn between her natural nurturing role and the need to be tough? What happens to the golden balls and the timelessness of childhood where the child's clock is synchronised with TV-programmes, and train timetables, and the child's pace adjusted to the speed of the fast lane on the motorway?

Fire Energy

The golden ball brings me full circle. The Iron John story contains fire and water, the boy's hair and the water of the lake, just as fire and water were together, however uncomfortably, in my conception fantasy.

In Jungian terms, the fire represents for me my animus. The repercussions of finding an ice-cube at the centre of my female identity as described in the conception fantasy were long and painful, although the discovery of it felt like a long overdue explanation for familiar struggles. The discovery of the wriggly fiery sperm, on the other hand, felt new and good and surprising, and marks the first real acknowledgement of my masculine energy.

Discovering that life-giving male part was every bit as important to me, as the discovery in men of what Bly calls passion and Keen calls fierceness.

My work of developing as a woman still consists of building the fire power, fanning the flames, unfreezing the water and letting it flow; and seeing what effects fire can have on ice and water, rather than allowing water to douse the fire. The ice needs the fire to bring it to life, as the egg needs the sperm to fertilise it.

A series of dreams following the fantasy experience seems to draw attention to the male part of me, many of them apparently using gold to symbolise the masculine. One connects with the sperm theme with an exuberant goldfish, some show me a shrunken foetus-like little old man, some involve erotic encounters with dark men, others are rich with gold icons, gold chains and decorations. A later dream continues the theme, giving me the message that it is the merging of the masculine and the feminine that is precious:

I met an elder of the pixie tribe. Cross between a pixie and a druid — light but wise. Gave me a small gold egg in a purse made of gold thread lace.

Journal 22nd July 1991

A still later dream which has a momentous quality shows a ongoing development of this theme. The animus I meet has metamorphosed. He is like a wild man with none of the under-developed or homunculus feel of the little old man. Also there is no antagonism, but a feeling of mutual acceptance and easy communication.

His nakedness isn't ordinary/real. There is no sense of it ... we are not embarrassed, relative strangers, and there is no sexuality around. His skin is gravelly, not quite hairy, almost pebble-dash like a pelt.

Then we are sitting on the sofa. The talk with the grey pelt guy is OK — next a hole in the wall just above the sofa ... starts to dribble mortar and reveals red Christmas wrapping paper stuffed into a hole. The ... paper falls out. That reveals a piece of cardboard blocking a larger (w)hole and that starts to slip as well. ... revealing a great void and a huge well disappearing at the bottom of the wall behind the sofa.

Journal 5th January 1992

The *hole* turns into a larger *whole* in the writing which seems more hopeful than threatening, and, to balance the threatening expanses of dilapidation elsewhere in the house, I discover a wonderful basement room with earth floor and brick walls:

... solid walls with interesting shapes and little niches in them and all painted white with little plants growing in the cracks. Its a bit like an igloo or a kiln inside.

Journal 5th January 1992

What better place for resolving issues between ice and fire than an underground room which resembles both an igloo and a kiln.

Emotional and Interpersonal Competence — owning the feeling dimension

Chapter 9 sets out the difficulties I encountered when I started out as a facilitator. In this chapter I begin at the intra-personal level to chart my personal progress and methods in becoming more aware of feelings and more emotionally competent through co-counselling; I show the relevance of this experience to the inter-personal dimension in the commercial setting, drawing on my own experience and the models of John Heron, Denis Postle, and William Torbert.

Personal Progress

My experience of co-counselling was a critical turning point, and marked the dawning of a general consciousness of self, identity and the need to come to terms with emotions. If I look back from there to childhood, I see my father flapping his eyelids in dismissive irritation at the unnecessary intrusion of emotion into any conversation. He seemed to manage the messiness of emotions by concentrating intently on the material structure of his immediate environment, and lining up one predictably straight line with another until the danger had passed (see Chapter 11). I notice similar uncomfortable body movements in group members from rigidly structured organizations when I begin to address emotions.

It is easy enough to see how I moved from a need to avoid provoking this uncomfortable reaction in my father to equating the discussion, let alone the *expression*, of emotion to something somehow indecent, tantamount to exposing my underwear (see Chapter 11). This inability to admit my own emotions and feelings was problematic in my personal life, with people close to me giving evidence of their frustration at my sudden withdrawals over the years: they have tried shaking the feelings out of me; have waved at me as if from a great distance, saying “is there anyone in there?”; or have been driven to kneel on my chest to try and squeeze the feeling out. My conditioning has an iron resistance not only to these tactics, but to the expression they aim to release: it is as if a grid closes my throat.

Involvement with Co-counselling

Learning co-counselling changed all this dramatically, to the extent that acquaintances stopped me in the street in the weeks following the course to ask what had effected the transformation they saw in me. Using the tools of the method allowed me to build on that initial breakthrough, progressing gradually towards teaching the process myself. The excitement of witnessing other people discovering themselves marked the beginning of my career as a facilitator.

Co-counselling is a method of personal development through self-help and mutual support. Co-counselling aims to access buried potential by dealing with rigid and limiting behaviour patterns, re-evaluating the past with the insight gained through catharsis, and using the energy released to live more fully.

It teaches people client skills for doing emotional work, and counsellor skills which mostly involve the ability to listen creatively

These aspects of co-counselling held particular importance for me:

- the underlying belief that “everyone is fundamentally OK”
- the central cathartic process
- the key principle that the client or worker, *not* the counsellor, is in charge of that process
- the notion of “balance of attention”
- and the belief that everyone has enormous potential

Everyone is fundamentally OK

This principle accorded with a long held belief of mine in the basic goodness of every human being. I had invoked considerable disapproval at school for failing to believe in original sin, and not managing to conceive of a positive force of evil in the world. Here at last I had found credible support for my own unformed beliefs which inclined more to the creation spirituality described by Matthew Fox (1983, 1988, 1990). It fitted my experience that people start out free of problems, and that their behaviour becomes increasingly distorted in a survival response to threats from their environment. This process may start very early, and the earlier it starts, the more damaging, deep-seated, and long-lasting the effects tend to be. The cathartic process of co-counselling seemed to me to offer a unique opportunity to heal many of those effects, so that the whole personality can re-emerge.

The cathartic process

When a good friend and colleague took me by the hand to my Fundamentals of Co-counselling course, I was in a state of barely functioning at work and at home, and unable to see a way forward. An image emerged from that time of myself in a glass box, able to see, but strangely distanced from the world, and unable to get a purchase on the slippery walls.

I could see no point in returning to a previous counselling relationship that could return me to a state of half-functioning. Co-counselling provided the radical solution I needed. It broke down walls within me, and between me and the rest of the world; broke me out of the glass cage; and unlocked the paralysis of body and senses, allowing me to feel, speak, and see as if for the first time. It felt like discovering the world was in colour after seeing it for years in black and white.

That happened in the space of two weekends, but the process had only just begun, and an enormous amount of hard work followed, using the co-counselling tools. Once the emotions were released I had to learn to distinguish between them and recognize them; communicate them without damaging others; cope with this sudden turbulent emotional life while managing work and family; contain and channel my new energy; and accept that there would be a continuing cycle of difficult troughs, cathartic work, and new energy until I had worked through major traumas.

People inquiring about co-counselling often express fears about the process. The most common is that it will confront them with frightening material that they cannot handle. My experience is that people have an inbuilt safety valve which prevents this. The efficacy of this safety valve depends on the absolute application of one of co-counselling's most important principles, that the client is in charge, and is not pressured in any way. This presupposes that the client is capable of being in charge: the process is unsuitable for any one in a mentally unstable state, at least outside of a situation where constant support is available from an experienced therapist who fully understands both the client's condition and the process.

Another frequently expressed fear is that the process could go on for ever and consume one's entire life. This again is up to the individual to decide. My experience is that after a relatively prolonged and intense period of work at the outset, most people tend to follow a cycle of inner work and outer activity where the inner work phases become shorter as time goes on. A plateau is reached where a stage of growth may feel complete, and it is entirely a matter of individual choice whether to stay on that plateau for a short or a long time, or for ever. For me, taking an Action Inquiry approach to this research, has further speeded up the cycling of outer action and inner reflection, and the two now interweave more closely.

The client is in charge

The first implication of this principle was that the changes I was achieving did not depend on anyone else, and that therefore nobody could take them from me.

The second consequence of being in charge was that I did not owe long-suffering friends anything. Being in charge also meant that I controlled the pace of my own development and determined its direction. A corollary of this principle is that no-one puts pressure on another person in terms of the depth, pace, or direction of their work, and this ensures that the client is able to cope with emergent material. The psyche will not go where it is not ready to work.

Balance of attention

Being in charge depends upon the ability to achieve and maintain a balance of attention, that is, a piece of attention that stays clear of the emotions and monitors the process during

catharsis. In the language of Transactional Analysis this is a part of the Adult (factual) ego state overseeing the Child (emotional) ego state. In practice this is often also the chronological present day Adult monitoring the Child of the past. This attention is necessary to the process (the Adult selects techniques to use, accepts or rejects interventions of the counsellor, keeps track of time, and ensures physical and psychological safety), and to effective integration of the learning from a session.

Anyone who is unable to “switch attention” in this way between the internal voices of the Child and the Parent which provide the material of the emotional task, and the process voice of the Adult, is unable to be in charge of directing their own work, or to gain insight from it. This ability to distinguish between past trauma and present reality *as they coexist* in a session, and make the connection between them is the key to re-evaluating the past. The insight that follows catharsis consists of extracting from the past that which is relevant to the present, and reframing it, thereby untangling a knot which has previously bound us. Thus the balance of attention allows us to mediate between our selves and find a metacommunication to break us out of the double bind of patterned behaviour (Bateson 1972).

Incidentally this skill is also fundamental to the methods of Action Inquiry, in which the inquirer is included in the field of observation (Torbert 1981), implying the need for a vantage point from which the inquirer can view both Self, Other, and the interaction between them. Torbert extends the habit of such a “balance of attention” so that it is available in daily interaction.

Everyone has enormous potential

I had known the truth of this intuitively for years, and had become afraid of death because I feared wasting my whole life without finding the key to my own potential.

At that stage I think my picture of my potential was of one parcel which I could unwrap and use. Finding such a parcel was sufficient wealth, and I did not question whether there were any more where it came from. In time, however, I discovered more parcels, and gradually came to understand with some wonder that potential is more aptly likened to an eternal spring than a finite number of parcels.

Co-counselling has been criticized for dwelling too much on cathartic work and giving too little attention to directing the energy thus released. I consider that this is a bias in the right direction, and that a natural balance tends to emerge between inner work and outer action. Numerous other methods and techniques abound which focus on practical goals, and the structures for such work also exist within co-counselling if individuals choose to use them. However, I know of no other easily accessible method of growth which attends so fully to healing emotional wounds and releasing the associated insight and energy. Emotions have a

bad press in our society generally, and methods like co-counselling can begin to redress that. I believe that people in many situations need such methods which teach trust in fundamental humanity, if they are to be less afraid of themselves and others, and avoid the damaging results of acting out of fear and defensiveness.

Transferring Humanistic Psychology to Commercial Training

The original motivation for moving into commercial training grew out of my work as a co-counselling teacher. I wanted to shift the balance of my time in the direction of group work at the same time as making that financially viable. I based my new work on the humanistic principles underlying co-counselling, although I was at first reticent about citing these as the prime philosophical influence on my way of working. However, I discovered that this reticence, and a sort of fierce diffidence about what I most deeply believed produced a contradiction, a guarded uncertainty, in me that seemed to be picked up by inquiring minds, whether potential critics or not, and invited the very challenges that I had hoped to avoid. As I recognized this and gained confidence, I became more explicit about my beliefs and grew in the courage of my convictions. I was then able to present my philosophy without equivocation and to start to manage the expectations of course participants.

As my practice has developed, management of emotions has become the core element of nearly everything I do, focused around the following four sets of models:

The Safety Pyramid and the Johari Window

The Support/Challenge Ratio

The Human Needs (or LUF) Triangle

Dustbin Theory (based on the co-counselling theory of catharsis)

A brief preliminary word about using models in general. Models present the world and life as much simpler, tidier, and more absolute than they really are. The definition of a model as a "useful set of lies" is helpful, although as absolute as the models themselves. Clearly a model does not represent life as it is, but it is useful in reducing that complexity, isolating a part so that we can see it, and providing a language for talking about it. In presenting the models verbally and interactively with a group, much more of the ambiguity, overlapping of parts, and light and shade of real life creeps back in, than may be apparent in print, and I ask the reader to bear this in mind.

The sets of models I use have evolved untidily over time from my original use of the Johari Window and the Support/Challenge ratio during the early culture-setting stages of personal development groups. I added the Human Needs triangle when it became clear that having an understanding of emotions was an indispensable part of assertiveness training for the

people I was working with. The emotional baggage of the past was preventing them from being effective in changing future behaviour.

The Safety Pyramid represents an up-hierarchy where each layer emerges from, and is dependent upon, the layer below. Safety provides the conditions for Openness; which encourages the growth of Trust; which allows people to take Risks, experiment, and Challenge each other; which in turn leads to true Co-operation and fundamental Change. The conditions prevailing at each layer are described below.

The Safety Pyramid



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SAFETY

In any situation where change, growth, co-operation, or personal development is at stake, the issue of safety is fundamental to effective group working. Without this, the members may be withdrawn and defensive and focused mainly on survival. Conversation will be trivial, while people suss out others motivation, and the potential threat to the self.

OPENNESS

Only when people feel safe will they begin to move from projecting a purely impersonal public persona to revealing a more human image (beginning to open that sector of the Johari window that is "known to self and not to others"). With the opening of this window, group members are able to become open and honest, both with each other and themselves. They start to share emotions and become open about their own personal agendas and issues they care about.

TRUST

With this sharing emerges a feeling of trust in other members of the group. Once other people can be relied on not to laugh, disparage or take advantage, then group members will be more willing to take risks, both in what they attempt themselves and in how they interact with others, knowing that this will not be taken in the wrong spirit.

CHALLENGE and RISK

In this trusting environment, group members can take the risk of becoming truly challenging, in the sense of "loving confrontation". Procedures, behaviour, perceptions of identity can all

be examined and reviewed. Congruence (or the lack of it) between motivation, perception, and effect of behaviour can be checked out and fed back.

CHANGE and CO-OPERATION

As a direct result of such trusting, constructive, specific, and supportive feedback, true co-operation, and real and lasting change can then be expected.

The pyramid is a high level summary of the stages required for an individual, team, or organization to achieve lasting change. In terms of Heron's model, it describes the conditions necessary for people to take the considerable risk of reconnecting with their real selves through the participative modes of feeling and imagination.

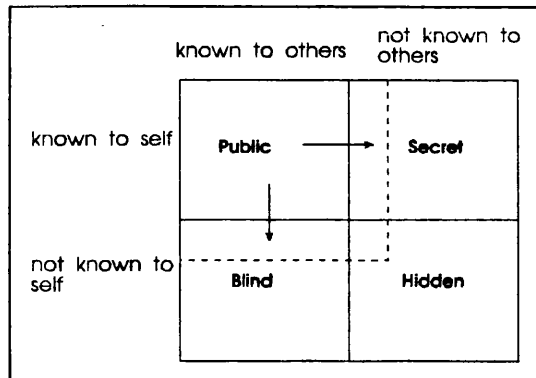
If people are not prepared to engage at that level, the process will be more superficial, lip service will be paid to intentions to change, undiscussibles will be generated (Argyris and Schön 1978) and it is likely that the status quo will be maintained. Alternatively inappropriate *addictive* (Bateson 1972) solutions will be found on an ad hoc basis without attention to the wider reaching problems of which the current difficulties are merely a symptom. Far more serious problems will be caused further down the line because the ecological balance of the system has been disturbed.

In ad hoc groups of people who are coming together for the sole purpose of a training course, it is possible for the facilitator to initiate and guide the process of creating the safety with the group so that they arrive at the base of the pyramid. This is not so much artificial as free-floating safety, encapsulated, and unencumbered by the history of existing relationships between group members.

Existing teams or groups of colleagues present a more complex problem. When I was working recently with a board of governors they described themselves as not having reached the base line of the pyramid. One way to get the process of building safety started is for a trainer or consultant to make a leap of faith onto the Openness level of the pyramid, before the safety net is in place. For example, by leading the way in making relevant disclosures about life experiences, or emotions in the here and now, I can set a precedent of openness, and lead participants away from their normal habits of interaction (see Chapter 13 Contracts and Vulnerability).

Originally, before discovering the Safety Pyramid I used the Johari Window in the early stages of a group.

The Johari Window



The **PUBLIC** sector represents the faces we show to the world, the image we knowingly project. We see it, others see it, and our combined perception adds up to our public identity.

The **SECRET** area is the part of ourselves we prefer not to reveal intentionally to others. As we grow more self-confident, we may risk

being more open, while still being selective about the people we trust. Thus, the secret area may be quite small when we are with an intimate friend, but very large with someone we have only just met.

The **BLIND** area is potentially the source of uncomfortable home truths — blind spots we may have about ourselves which may be uncomfortable or surprising to hear about; images or attitudes we project or leak involuntarily. They may be negative or positive — either way they are usually difficult to hear and accept. But nevertheless most people want to know about them at some level, whether from curiosity, or because it is uncomfortable for others to have impressions of us of which we are not aware.

The **HIDDEN** part probably contains a huge reservoir of untapped potential, which accounts for the amazing capacity that people have for change and growth and survival. If you have ever commented that you felt you were not achieving your potential, not feeling fulfilled in some way (even without knowing what your potential might be, or where fulfilment might lie) you were making reference to that hidden area. Similarly, when a person rises unexpectedly to the occasion in a crisis, it is often said "I didn't know she/he had it in her/him".

Note that in life, as in the diagram, it is not possible to access the hidden area without pushing back the boundaries of the secret and the blind sections. In order to realize our full potential we need to consider being more open and vulnerable, to give out more of ourselves, and to receive constructive feedback.

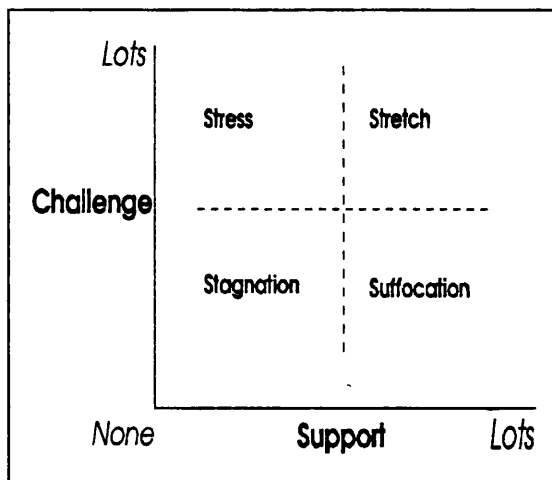
I would stretch this model to the full to incorporate all the stages I hoped to move through in the life of the group:

1. The openness necessary to building trust in any new meeting, cycling with ...
2. The need to build trust in order to be open, however gradually
3. The stronger challenge of giving and receiving feedback in order to open up the Blind quadrant (*Pyramid Challenge & Risk level*)

4. The purpose of accessing potential (Johari *Hidden* quadrant; Pyramid *Change* level) involving evolution and change which make the risks worth taking
5. Finally, addressing safety moving back to the base of the pyramid, to attend to the conditions that make it possible for anyone to be prepared to take that risk. This then led on to the next model, the Support/Challenge Ratio.

The Support/Challenge Ratio and the Energy Model

The balance of support and challenge at work (and at home) is important: with too much pressure and little encouragement, people can crack; but equally, the other extreme can become too cosy, and tedious.



With generous support we are capable of coping with far more pressure than we are if we have no support. We experience the pressure as stimulating and challenging, and take pleasure in stretching our capacity to the full. The line between stimulating pressure and stress is a thin one, however, and needs constant monitoring if a damaging amount of pressure is to be avoided.

Support can take the form of interest or enthusiasm for what we are doing, or it can be physical or emotional caring. You might like to refer to the exercise about human needs to consider what sort of support you want, or have, and whether it meets your current need for support. The support you are *getting* may take the form of delicious meals, flowers, or pints at the pub, when what you *need* is intellectual stimulation, or career counselling, or vice versa. Your partner or manager might think they are providing a lot of support, but you experience it as useless, and equivalent to none.

You may be able to identify jobs you have had or whole periods of your life which correspond to quadrants of the matrix. You may find that you are swinging in and out of the quadrants on a daily basis. This may suit you, but you may find that you are mostly in a quadrant which doesn't suit you, and may want to think of ways in which you could change that, by taking more risks maybe, or by asking for what you want in terms of support from colleagues, manager or partner, or friends.

The key to achieving any control over where people find themselves on the Support/Challenge diagram lies in knowing what support is right for them individually. This

relates forward to the model of human needs which suggests that the psyche has three needs fundamental to healthy functioning. They are for Love, Understanding, and Freedom, hence the shorthand, LUF triangle.

The LUF Triangle and Dustbin Theory

John Heron (1977) suggests that human beings have three basic needs apart from their physical and spiritual needs. These are for love, understanding, and freedom. Each of these needs has an active and a passive mode, so that we need to:

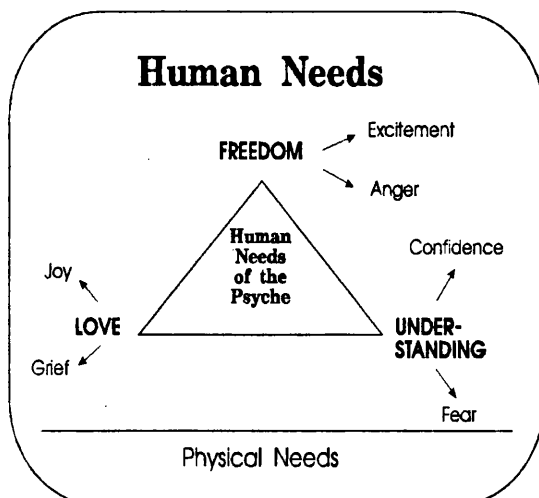
- love and be loved
- understand and be understood
- have freedom to choose and be freely chosen by others

Heron (1992) adds the need to image and be imaged, but I have not yet included this development. Until I find a way of making it both "my own" and meaningful to the audiences I meet I believe it would confuse the issue. It does however add an important dimension to the picture, giving a place for imaginal life:

... human beings have a profound need to enjoy a flourishing stream of imagery — tactile, kinaesthetic, auditory and visual — in waking life, dream life and altered states of consciousness.

Heron 1992 p. 120

Fulfilment of these needs leads to positive emotional states and free flow of energy so that we are fully functioning human beings capable of achieving our potential.



When our need for love is met we experience a range of joyful emotions from ecstasy to contentment. When our need for knowledge and information is met, we can move ahead with confidence, or even excitement. When we live in freedom, we can grow and develop and experience fulfilment. We feel in control and responsible and have the satisfaction of using our initiative.

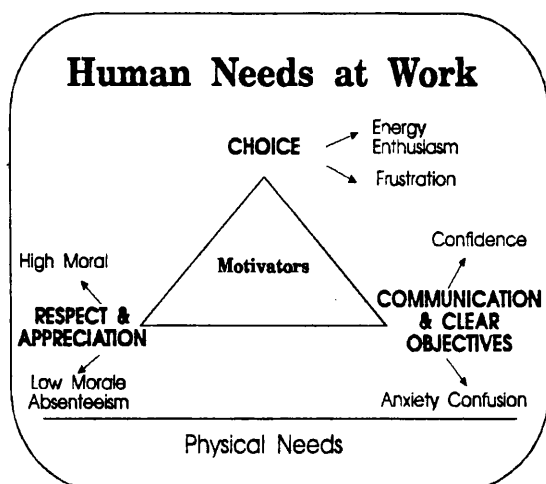
If our need for imaging is met we experience

appreciation (Heron 1992 p. 122), an aesthetic pleasure in a whole range of imagery and artistic expression.

Frustration of these needs, on the other hand, produces negative emotional states. Without love we are subject to grief, which may involve anything from mild disappointment, through feelings of rejection and depression to suicidal states. Energy is low and we become apathetic. Without understanding we experience fear, ranging from confusion and anxiety to paralysing panic and terror. We feel insecure and cannot progress if we do not know what is expected of us. If our freedom is threatened we become angry and frustrated, and this may mean mild irritation or the violence of a child's (or adult's) temper tantrum.

If our imaging needs are unmet, we experience boredom. If I needed convincing this would persuade me of the importance of imaging in this model as I have long sought a place for what I have called "primary boredom" (Journal 13th June 1991) and what Heron calls "genuine boredom" (Heron 1992 p. 127). I recognized "secondary boredom" as a cover for other negative emotions of anger or fear, but maintained the existence of primary boredom. However I could not find a place for it on Heron's triangle, and did not play freely enough with the model to uncover the unmet need and change the model. Heron further distinguishes "spurious boredom" arising from laziness, and distinct from "pseudo-boredom" (my secondary boredom) which masks other emotions.

The concepts of love, understanding, and freedom are too global for people to be able to



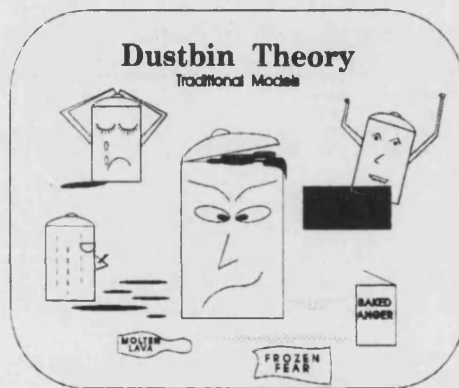
identify with them as valid needs in the work setting. I therefore adapted this model using more specific words that business people could more easily relate to. I now acknowledge that I took this step at least in part to avoid using the word "love" at a stage of my experience and development, when I wasn't sure that I could defend it. More recently I have started to insist upon love as something we can no longer afford to do without in our dealings with each other.

The words I substituted are illustrated in the diagram "Human Needs at Work".

Humanistic co-counselling theory maintains that if human beings allow themselves free expression of negative (and positive) emotions, they can free themselves of their sometimes paralysing effects, and the system returns to a state of equilibrium.

This is demonstrated in bereavement where a mourner who is able to grieve freely is more quickly able to return to normal functioning than the person whose grief has been repressed for whatever reason. Similarly, in the four year old who has a tantrum, it may seem that the raging will last for ever, but, if allowed to run its course, the tantrum is quickly over, and switches off almost as if nothing had ever happened.

Such expressions of emotion are healthy, but are rarely permissible in our society, let alone in the working environment where such frankness may well lose someone their job. We are soon taught from early childhood that emotions are unacceptable. Little boys are taught to be big and brave and to develop a stiff upper lip in the face of tears. Little girls are taught that it is not feminine (only feminist) to be angry, and they also discover that tears embarrass most people too. So emotions are repressed, and those people who find no satisfactory outlet for them either suffer untold physical damage or conduct their lives like constantly erupting volcanoes.



As in the picture we become like an overflowing dustbin trying to keep the lid on a lifetime of emotion which was never allowed proper expression. The odds are stacked against us. We are using all our available energy to keep that lid on (see the Energy model), and have none free to live our lives. All the time there are minor internal explosions that shower debris over those nearest and dearest to us who are probably not at all to blame. And then, when we are at full stretch, life

throws another disaster at us, and we are blown apart.

There are various ways of being a dustbin, and, like many others, I have tried them all: raging indiscriminately at all and sundry; leaking silently and unpredictably in public as well as private places; and withdrawing completely, refusing to see, hear, or speak. None of them work, other than in the short term.



There is therefore a need for a means of expressing our emotions outside of normal daily activities in order to avoid the build up of harmful stress in containing them. At first it is usually necessary to arrange the equivalent of hiring a skip in terms of time and support needed for the initial prolonged and intensive excavation of the existing dustbin contents.

This frees space into which day to day rubbish can be thrown. Thereafter this rubbish is dealt with regularly, never allowing the level in the dustbin to rise above a manageable level.

Many groups and individuals have received my presentation of human needs as a revelation. One social worker, in a team experiencing serious trauma and pain, talked of "*being hit over the head with a sledge hammer*", and "*suddenly understanding the blindingly obvious*". The overwhelming emotion is very often one of relief, that people's feelings of despair and their experience of neediness are normal and to be expected given the circumstances. This is an example of the dawning of one aspect of emotional competence (see next section) which affords "*appreciation of the contribution of oppression ... to feelings and emotions*". It gives permission for previously inadmissible negative emotions. And in that admission there is already the beginning of release from the stress and the tension. It is also the beginning of moving out of the perception of self as victim towards a position of feeling empowered (see Chapter 13), and a recognition of the need for emotional competence.

The next stage is more difficult. For individuals, although they may accept the theory, it is hard to put into practice. For organisations, the prospect of allowing, let alone encouraging, the expression of emotion is too risky to contemplate. Few managers are able to reframe emotions as often positive and creative after viewing them as always negative for so long.

John Heron and Denis Postle on Emotional Competence

Having described how I have focused on emotional competence in working with groups I will now return to the wider theoretical context of that work. Emotional Competence is a concept I first encountered as a co-counsellor, through exploring the theoretical background of co-counselling's practice of catharsis in the writing of John Heron. When I interviewed Denis Postle just after publication of his *Mind Gymnasium*, he referred to this original version of John's ideas:

Denis: the concept of emotional competence ... Thought I'd made this up, then I discovered that John Heron had ... To me it's been useful to have it, not just a name, but as three parts.

The one being the capacity to express fully, negative and positive feelings, when you choose to.

The second to choose to hold on to feelings, negative and positive, securely hold on to them, so that they are not expressed at all. And not have to deal with them, to deal with them at another time.

And third, to be able to tolerate other people being distressed or very joyful — the expression fully, of others' feelings — without being restimulated. Toleration meaning being able to be with them.

I'm sure this isn't new, but I have found it very useful to get that straight with people sometimes.

Emotional competence isn't just being able to be angry.

Tape-recorded conversation with Denis 12th May 1989

Heron and Postle, meanwhile (Heron 1992) (Postle 1992), have both developed their thinking in this area. Heron has developed this model to 14 criteria which together map the emotional dimension. Amongst other things he distinguishes between healthy emotion and the distorted forms which result from emotional repression, and between aware catharsis and unaware acting out of emotion.

Meanwhile I had developed Heron's original three principles into a five point model which I have found simple enough to be a useful learning tool:

1. Recognize and acknowledge own emotions and distinguish between them
2. Express own positive and negative emotions fully and appropriately
3. Own and communicate emotions appropriately to relevant others without being overwhelmed and without blaming others
4. Put own emotions temporarily on one side when circumstances demand it
5. Tolerate the expression of emotions by others

I added the first principle, which has two stages, because this is a necessary preliminary step both for me and for many people I work with, right across the social and cultural spectrum, but particularly for men who went to public school. The beginner's stage consists of noticing and getting to know feelings in terms of the body signals that indicate the presence of an emotion. The next stage of recognition is to understand where strong emotions come from, what triggers them, and why.

I distinguish here between *expression* and *communication* of emotions. Full expression of emotions (number 2 in the above model) is a cathartic process requiring a safe place and a

witness who is both willing, prepared, and skilled in allowing and/or facilitating the catharsis. Communication (at number 3), on the other hand, is information about emotions in the form of a statement: "I am angry", where the speaker uses a tone and demeanour which is congruent with the emotion being communicated, but avoids *becoming* angry.

I also make the distinction between, on the one hand, the "bottom-line" minimum of emotional competence which I advocate for any would-be assertive person aspiring to access their potential and maintain their equilibrium in the world of both personal and business relationships; and, on the other hand, the more proactive competence required of "helpers", be they therapists, managers, team leaders, supervisors, mentors, or in my case, facilitators of courses or groups with significant personal development content. For this group of people I would add a sixth category of necessary competence which is "Facilitate the expression of emotions by others".

For facilitators, there is a further implication of this sixth category which needs to be made explicit. A facilitator who is working in personal development where emotions are involved, must have worked on their own emotions at a deeper level than they expect group members to reach in order for the group to feel safe and contained.

Putting one's own emotions on one side is also a key skill for facilitators and Mick, a facilitator in local government, has a memorable way of doing that. I have an image of him sitting in the armchair in my office, his hands describing his thoughts, and talking of mentally "taking pictures" of incidents when he is facilitating. He referred to this series of stills as his "pictures at an exhibition" method of managing emotional packages when working with a group. He would simply store incidents as complete gestalts to return to, probably when a similar occurrence allowed him to compare the two and reflect on the meaning.

So one of the ways then that I manage it, is by locking away the sequence of events and information, and going back to them like a memory store in the computer when I'm ready to deal with it, ... Because I am then able to revisit that in a very real way. It's not like reading a book. It's going back to it with the same emotional feeling that I had when I was experiencing it. ... what I call the picture show model of managing my emotions. I revisit them until I understand what I perceive was going on out there, ...in here.

Taped conversation with Mick 9th May 1989

Principles 3-5, which involve *control* of emotions, depend heavily on the regular emotional housekeeping of principle 2 where emotions are *expressed*. For the activities of talking about, putting aside, and witnessing emotion all exert pressure on the dustbin, which if full, will overflow and sabotage attempts at being controlled. So learning and teaching the second principle is central emotional competence work. I am competent at expressing my

own emotions and in facilitating that in others in a co-counselling context, but have not found it possible to achieve other than isolated examples of such cathartic expression in a more formal setting.

There are a number of reasons for this. People are inhibited in front of colleagues from the same team, and even more so with strangers from the same company. Within a team, personality clashes may make expression of emotion too risky. Often there is not enough time to build the extra safety necessary for this work and the recovery from it. Anything that recalls to mind the work environment is likely to be an inhibitor, whether it be buildings, seating, dress, or messages from work or family. Proximity to other people is only relevant once embarrassment in the group is no longer an issue.

When someone does express emotion, not only that person learns, but the group as well have the opportunity for learning to overcome embarrassment, and learning to accept rather than avoid or try to fix the "problem", all part of the fifth principle of tolerating emotion in others.

Tears are particularly problematic in work settings. Even E, a transformation consultant, although comfortable with anger, has difficulty working out how she feels about tears:

I have to be honest and say I wouldn't like to have people in tears, it wouldn't be my preference. ... I would think how appropriate is it? And yet ... people go off the to the loo and cry. ... Or they go down the pub ... It's all there anyway. ...I mean I cry at work. I've had three meetings with my boss. Floods of tears. Because I know that they are there. And I know that all my attention will be focused on suppressing them and not on communicating. So I just say look..., I'm going to cry, ... Don't worry about it, it's fine. It doesn't mean anything ..., Just water coming out my eyes. And so I create a context for tears. It'll be a little more difficult in a group, ... how OK would it be if somebody cried? I think if the environment and the context was created correctly, there's no reason why not.

But I think there is a certain amount of pioneering in what we do. Maybe in twenty or thirty years time people will regularly get together and cry, get together and express their emotions, and it won't be California.

Taped conversation 19th July 1993

By noticing that she can create a context for tears for herself with her manager she becomes more open to the idea of facilitating that in a group. Previously she seemed to have been happy for group members to take their tears out of the group, possibly because that strategy co-incided with her personal comfort.

Postle likewise emphasises the interdependence of the personal and the political:

a definition of emotional competence which refers only to individuals, and ignores the broader social context, may unwittingly tend to support and sustain injustice and oppression.

Postle 1992

Postle's analysis of the ecology of emotional competence (Postle 1992) carries a similar message to Heron's contracting spiral of development (Heron 1992), expressed in a simpler and more direct way with indications at each point as to how an emotionally competent person can interrupt the impact of the development cycle. Postle's ten criteria of emotional competence are a practical inventory of the awareness and work necessary to becoming emotionally competent. He also spells out the negative emotions, mind states, and symptoms that may be experienced by those who are underdeveloped in each area of competence.

Postle's **first** criterion is having ready access to emotions and feelings, which is an extension of my first principle of being able to recognize and identify emotions. His **second** is threefold, including free and appropriate expression of emotion, containing feelings, and tolerating expression of emotion in others. The last two map with my numbers 4 and 5, but his use of expression is different from either 2 or 3 of my criteria. I understand it as having an easy spontaneity (alongside awareness of appropriateness) which is absent from my use of expression (see below), or communicating *about* emotions. Neither Postle nor Heron refer to this competence of communicating assertively about emotions which I see as key to handling oppressive situations and moving out of the victim position (see Chapter 13). Postle's **third** criterion concerns understanding the effect of early trauma on adult behaviour; the **fourth** is related, and involves dealing with the unfinished business of the past that produces projection and transference. The **fifth** concerns the contribution of oppression to feelings and emotions, and the **sixth** the ability to supportively confront unaware behaviour in others. Heron captures the balance of support and confrontation in this skill: "*The uncompromising feedback is fundamentally respectful*" (Heron 1992 p.134). The **seventh** is twofold, involving cathartic discharge, the equivalent of my number 2, and transmutation through a shift in consciousness, a skill that I have not yet much considered. My use of the word "expression" rather than catharsis admittedly runs the risk of diluting this concept of competence, but it was a deliberate choice aimed at not alienating the sort of audiences I most frequently meet. The **eighth** criterion is about individuals taking responsibility for their own continuing development in this area. The **ninth**, an important one for co-facilitation issues (see Chapter 13) involves the skills of co-operation and negotiation, and the **tenth** attends to monitoring the quality of one's attention and relations with others, not only relevant to co-facilitation, but to collaborative research and Action Inquiry in particular.

Postle acknowledges his debt to John Heron in this area of work. Both writers cover similar ground in describing the benefits of emotional competence. First and foremost it “validates both positive emotions and distress emotions” (Heron 1992 p. 13) and it considers catharsis to be healthy and purposeful, rather than evidence of breakdown. For Heron, practising the four basic skills involved which correspond to Postle's second and seventh criteria, makes the affective mode of feeling more accessible.

William Torbert on Interpersonal Competence

Although both Heron and Postle set the notion of emotional competence in a social, educational, and political context, and indicate ways in which such awareness can impact cultural patterns, their prime focus is on how the individual works at the intra-personal level to achieve this competence. Torbert's exploration of interpersonal competence (Torbert 1981) moves out of this domain into social interaction in the context of living inquiry. Torbert's concern is to develop Argyris and Schön's inquiring strategy as a viable alternative to the mystery-mastery strategy (see Chapter 13) so prevalent among education professionals, and indeed many other people. He points out that this is an *interactive social competence*

the capacity in one's work and play with others:

- *To clarify, to formulate, and to do what one wishes*
- *To test for and correct incongruities among wish (purpose), formulation (theory or strategy), action (interactive process), and effect*
- *To help others do the same, given the limits of mutual commitment*

Torbert 1981 p.178

Torbert expands on this dense definition setting the overall aim of

creating a social climate of inquiry ... in which one can increasingly count on receiving truthful information from others about one's effects on them, as well as exploratory criticisms about possible ambiguities or incongruities among one's purpose, strategy and action.

Torbert 1981 p.178

It appears that Torbert assumes emotional competence as a prerequisite of this strategy. It is implicit in his description of action science which “*includes the inquirer within the field of observation*” (Torbert 1981); one might further assume that the very fact that the emotional dimension is explicitly excluded from Argyris and Schön's (1974) description of the mystery-mastery strategy, would ensure its inclusion in Torbert's alternative strategy. Not making it explicit in his definition, however, could lead to the naive assumption that the skills of

interpersonal competence on their own could form the basis for effective ongoing working (and playing) relationships even if those involved were not already emotionally competent.

These skills would not work effectively if simply learned as a formula, or applied as a sticking plaster to cover old patterns. If unacknowledged distress and repressed emotion is present it will break through and spoil the strategy.

The mystery-mastery strategy may sometimes be deliberate and manipulative, or it may be unaware, unintentional and compulsive. Torbert refers to the findings of Argyris and Schön:

These professionals often espouse strategies of openness and collaboration, but ... reveal a mystery-mastery pattern. The incongruity between what the professionals say they do and what they actually do is usually a complete and (unpleasant) surprise to them.

Torbert 1981 p.174

and notes the difficulty these professionals have in learning new behaviours once they have recognised the incongruities. However Torbert's suggestions for improvement are all at the strategy level — unlearning one strategy, learning another, and putting in constant practice. Such an approach neglects the underlying feeling work that usually needs to be done to clear the channels for change. Without this preliminary, the practice of a new strategy may be frustrating and ineffective.

This is widely recognised by many students of assertiveness that I meet both in the multi-cultural groups of people returning to paid employment, and in courses run in commercial and educational settings. They see that there is no hope of sustaining the calm, level tone of assertiveness if there is a risk of emotions overflowing in tears, shaking, or rage, or if their energy is swamped in depression or diverted into controlling emotions. Many of them plan to take a co-counselling course in order to address the intra- as well as the inter-personal need.

The danger of Torbert's approach *on its own* is of becoming technically competent in interaction, but in an alienated way which I believe is far from his intention. Co-counselling *on its own* may not make me a better facilitator, but it helps to connect me to my intuitive and affective knowing which will allow me to be more present, grounded and responsive. However, the combination of the tools and skills of emotional competence as described by Heron, and Postle, and the strategies of Torbert's interpersonal competence give a comprehensive approach.

Interpersonal Competence in Practice

Torbert (1981b) identifies three components of interpersonal competence which provide a useful structure for charting developing competence. They are self-disclosure (expressing

and questioning one's experience), supportiveness (encouraging this expression in others), and confrontation (juxtaposing two apparently incongruous aspects of experience).

Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure sets an example of open communication that I use in facilitating in several ways. The first is in providing examples out of my own life, both as child and adult, to illustrate aspects of or models I am using in a course. This is partly to bring theories to life, partly to give permission and encouragement to others to share their own experience in order to open up discussion in the group. This has proved to be a major contribution to group safety and has the spin-off of empowering the group, because I am not seen as different and "superior", but more as part of the group.

The second use of self-disclosure is related to this last perception. I sometimes relate the history of my experience in groups (from very shy and defended group member to facilitator of large groups) to people who are struggling with their own lack of confidence, simply to give them encouragement in how people can change, and to give credibility to the methods I am advocating.

The third use is rather different, particularly in context. In groups where I am facilitating process and have no task agenda, where emotions may be running high, and I am unclear about the best structure to offer the group, I can admit my lack of clarity, and that my stuckness reflects their stuckness. This has the effect of freeing both sides into an easier joint solving of the problem, and stops me either allowing the group to wallow, or rushing in with a rescuing activity. It hands the problem back to the group to uncover their own needs, and gives space to honour diversity within the group. This has been the most difficult use of self-disclosure because my initial reaction to such situations is to feel a failure. I prefer to play for time behind a defensive mask, rather than admit what seems like incompetence. On two occasions in the early days I hid behind a co-facilitator, waiting for them to find the "right" way forward, only to discover afterwards that they were doing the same. Latterly this kind of disclosure has felt increasingly valid, acceptable, and necessary.

In learning assertiveness students I work with find this third use of self-disclosure a useful tactic for avoiding conflict in many contexts because it invites a peer problem solving approach. Nevertheless they fear being exploited and have difficulty abandoning their mystery-mastery view of the world in favour of being open. They are particularly wary of using this behaviour with their own managers in organisations with a mystery-mastery culture.

Self-disclosure invites feedback and makes feedback easier to give. This has been a further use of the strategy in the self and peer assessment sessions at the end of personal development courses. Each participant, including the facilitator starts his or her session with a self-assessment (scoping it as they choose on the course, work, or life) and this is followed by feedback from the listeners. What follows is an exploration of the accuracy of people's perceptions of one another, an exchange of information about the effects of behaviours, a checking of incongruities and a warm exchange of appreciations, much as Torbert hopes for.

All of these uses of self-disclosure have their degenerate form. The first can lapse into "I'm useless and need your help more than you need mine"; the second can be patronising or boasting; the third can be an "I'm useless" statement and abdication either of the facilitator role or of responsibility for one's own part of a peer discussion; the last can attract attack. The success of them all depends on the right motivation, alert attention to the needs of individuals and the group, appropriate timing, and a fundamental feeling of overall confidence in the cultural climate.

Supportiveness

Supportiveness sets that climate of trust and empathy where self-disclosure is encouraged, and the *person* supported, although their *behaviour* may be challenged. This competence is the one that comes most naturally to me, a strength which can contain the seeds of weakness. I provide good support in a group, in a general sense of building good safety, and in a specific sense of providing individual support, appropriate activities, and in arranging combinations of people and structures to allow people to work creatively rather than inhibiting each other.

I would like to honour my mother's part in providing the security of my early days, and for the insights this has given me. By fulfilling my security needs she gave me a precious foundation of self-esteem and, I have recently realised, taught me a lot about safety. On the one hand I learned to know it, recognize it, and develop some sort of benchmark; on the other hand it was demonstrated to me, deep in my experience, that security alone is not enough, but needs to be balanced by stimulus and challenge.

Supportiveness can become an overdone strength when it colludes with my need to be liked and the preference of others not to be too uncomfortable.

Confrontation

Being over confrontational, on the other hand, can turn into lack of sensitivity and a contradiction of my undertaking to allow individuals to be self-directing. Recently I caught myself in time, when I was about to pressure a woman into completing an exercise, although

her emotional state was telling me that she had had enough learning for one day. I noticed that a recent success with confrontation was tempting me to prove my new found confidence inappropriately.

Learning to confront has been the most difficult skill for two reasons: 1) it is the intervention most likely to trigger expression of emotion in others, and I may therefore avoid it for all the reasons described above in the section on emotional competence. 2) Confrontation also puts at risk my need to be liked. Ironically, when I have achieved it well, it has earned me respect as well as the professional satisfaction that people have done some work. I lose the nagging guilt for failing people that I have often felt in the past after missed opportunities.

The learning has built over several years. Once in the early months when I reminded a group member, M, of an agreed principle to use the first person in order to own emotions, she accused me of being controlling and then forgot her intended contribution. I felt inept and clumsy until it was pointed out to me that I had indeed confronted her with her own emotions which was the intention of the principle I was upholding. I later noticed that my reaction — of shying away from emotion because it was directed at me — matched that of Argyris and Schön's students who were unpleasantly surprised to find themselves falling into habits of mystery-mastery.

I needed to learn to step out of the mystery-mastery frame which traps us in the Oppressor, Victim, Rescuer triangle, notice the contradiction I see in someone's behaviour, and simply reflect back the incongruity.

Sometimes a whole course is confronting in itself, as in a Time Management course where some students displayed the incongruous expectations of setting goals and leaving personal values and priorities unexamined. One woman, J, objected to looking inward instead of just learning techniques. In a discussion about priorities Sara, my co-facilitator, had used the metaphor of juggling balls in the air. I record:

Contributions so far had been superficial, perfunctory even. Strongest emotion identified had been boredom. ... J said that it was her personal ball that got dropped. Sara pursued that — "how did she feel about that?" Shrugged off as just one of those things: "life's like that, I'm busy, no big deal, it's OK". Resistance to any further exploration.

Then M announced ... that he had discovered that it was his people ball that got dropped, that he got absorbed in technical stuff ... and neglected his need for people. ... got lonely without them. ... he tended to justify this by saying that people weren't OK, and that really he knew that this wasn't true and that it was awful to think of dropping people who were valuable on that arrogant assumption, just as an escape-avoidance.

J said at this point "this is frightening". with encouragement explaining "what is happening here and now is frightening". Said she didn't like looking inward, and examining things at such depth. She felt ready to go.

Journal 7th June 1990

Next day J was quieter. I introduced an exercise, suggesting that it should include a brief presentation to which J abreacted with horror:

At coffee time, ... I said to her that she was under no obligation to share her output if she preferred not to. ... that the exercise was primarily for her use, not the group's and she should use it how she needed to. She talked about not wanting to let us inside her head. ... she had seriously debated whether to return for the second day, and had not expected to be looking so much at herself. She seemed glad of the permission and I did not expect her to present her tree.

Was very surprised when she did, very hurriedly, with quite a lot of embarrassment and protestations that there were few important things on it because they were private. She sat down to applause. And in the regret-appreciate round at the end she thanked me for what I had said to her at coffee without enlarging on what it was to the group.

Although the approach of the course was deeply confronting to J, the interventions Sara and I used were supportive, and it was this permission not-to-do that enabled J to participate. (I frequently find that this strategy is similarly empowering in other situations. For instance it tends to encourage otherwise resistant people to engage in role play exercises or to use CCTV.) I also reflect that if I had made my last supportive intervention publicly in the group instead of privately in the coffee break, J would have felt exposed rather than supported.

J later reappeared on another course, one specifically advertised as self-awareness. I expressed my pleasure and surprise at seeing her again, and she explained the impact of the Time Management course in coming to recognise that she needed to change things in her life. Hence her proactive decision to address the area she most feared, and look at herself.

Torbert advocates the *"fluid and timely interplay of these three kinds of inquiring behaviour"* (Torbert 1981) for effective group process. A careful balance of confrontation and support is required. Confrontation tips people into a discomfort which is fertile for learning if they can stay in it and examine it; however, if it is too intense they bolt back into defensive behaviour and the opportunity is lost.

A Widening Perspective

This chapter describes a process of acquiring a successively wider perspective. I entered co-counselling so immersed in my own (bad) emotions that I had to learn to identify what they were, before I could step back and deal with them. As a new facilitator I was immersed in my role. I had a good enough view to be effective if the focus stayed on the process, but if I *myself* was thrown into the frame by a challenge or criticism, I was lost again, with no sense of context around me or around the other person on which to gain a foothold.

As a group member, like M, I used to blame my discomfort on the facilitator, and as a new facilitator I was ready to take that blame guiltily. It took the perspective of a later learning stage to recognize these discomforts as a sign of growth. As I have developed, my perspective has widened, and I am able to step outside that blame/guilt, victim/oppressor framing of that situation. I am learning to see both contexts, notice their distance apart, their possible overlaps, and find a way of communicating from one to another.

An experience of my own gleeful critic as a researcher illustrates stepping out of the conflict frame. In a research dialogue with Susi, a facilitator colleague with whom I have also shared peer supervision, she recounted an incident in a group, and when I reviewed our session I found myself quite critical of her approach. At first I could not see a way to honour the research contract and the understanding between us which demanded that I share my feelings. My insecurity in my own facilitation process resulted in my gloating over this shortcoming and I felt unable to give her a straight criticism. Eventually I stepped out of the frame of my stuckness by drawing a picture of the incident. This gave me new insights and a fresh perspective, which I thought might be useful to Susi. This allowed me to move past my gloating, and I was able to share my perceptions with Susi, including the shameful glee, which led to a useful discussion of the issues involved.

The competent inquirer chooses not to enter the antagonistic frame, or is able to step out of it. He or she can then invite others to step out of that frame and engage in peer problem solving, in order to resolving conflict or defuse hostility. The conflict can then be viewed from that new perspective as a problem to examine. NLP's meta-mirror exercise offers a formal structure for this that invokes not only that level of meta-perspective, but a third level involving a wiser self who is able to endow the first level protagonists with the wisdom acquired at the second level.

Teams and organisations involved in managing conflict or major change tend to generate "undiscussibles", and to prefer superficial, short term solutions because they avoid addressing these issues. They resist interventions designed to examine the undiscussibles, which usually involve emotions, preferring to stay within their existing frame of reference

because it is more comfortable. Denis comments on the way such an organisation will seek to control the feeling dimension.

Denis: ... They buy in a feeling person. 'Cause somebody's told them they should know about that, but it isn't the same thing as really doing something about it. ... My sense is, that is one of the things the culture that we are in does, it reifies processes into things. If it's a thing you can put it in a box. Process is much more problematic. If you change the process, you change the institution, yes? But so far as a thing can be packaged, like I was certainly, ... you can manipulate it and control it. Well, a person or persons who handle feeling will also get turned into a thing. One of the products or facilities that are there.

Tape-recorded conversation with Denis 12th May 1989

We agreed that my role in X company fitted this description, and this view was reinforced by a message I was given by the training manager after a five-day residential team building course that had particularly dramatic results. He told me firmly that I should confine myself to my role of on-site skills training, anything else was "too dangerous". I interpreted this to mean that the organization had indeed been shaken by the team building, and that I was "safer" on short courses where I was unlikely to make much impact.

The team building course in question challenged and explored a number of undiscussibles, both between the manager and the team, between team members, and between the team and the organisation. The course had been put together ostensibly to address the problem of inter-shift co-operation. We further identified the manager's failure to take responsibility (in particular for a long-standing personnel problem), and his repeated failure to listen. It also quickly became apparent that the manager's concern to be "one of the lads" brought out the immature and irresponsible side of the young male team members which exacerbated the co-operation problem. The process started in the weeks before the course: the manager committed to, and was prepared for, some tough feedback from team members; and one shift leader attended a course with me after which she successfully confronted a member of her shift and was able to build on that relationship during the residential week.

We planned the course to include one whole and one half day session outdoors on the Tuesday and Thursday respectively so that there was time to both prepare and debrief these sessions effectively. For the outdoor work we used a set-up run by two outdoors facilitators in some woods, which included a high and a low ropes course and a number of ground level structures and activities. All the activities engaged in were based either on the principle of co-operation rather than competition, or on personal challenge. We hoped that difficult communication lessons might more readily be learned in the woods, and the metaphors transferred to the indoor setting. We also felt that the outdoor work would engage the large

number of young team members who would balk at sitting indoors for a week. Both these hopes were fully realised. This is further referred to in Chapter 15.

During the week the manager was confronted in a highly constructive and effective way which seemed to result in lasting change in his way of behaving. It was not simply a matter of putting responsibility for difficulties with the boss, however. Several young men who were becoming demotivated and having difficulty with authority came to accept their responsibility and became proactive in resolving problems. My perception was that the outdoor work played an important part in this process.

While debriefing the first of two outdoor sessions, we discovered that a number of fearless young men had exhausted the challenge of the high ropes, and were planning to use the equipment blindfold, and to do activities backwards in order to “up the ante”. When encouraged to explore what would be really challenging to them, they all admitted that facing emotions was harder than facing physical challenge in high places. Several were then prepared to put the competitive ego aside, and made it their challenge to address a different kind of fear, and to provide support for a frightened person attempting to conquer their fear of heights. This development led, not only to breakthroughs in relationships within the team, but to a shift in the team culture away from competition toward co-operation and support. As a result not only was the manager moved to action, but long-standing relationship difficulties involving several team members were also addressed and healed.

If this had been all it might simply have been considered a successful course with a raised eyebrow at rumours of tears being allowed. However, a tough management problem was also tackled and the manager prevailed upon to grasp a nettle avoided by successive managers for the previous twelve years. As a result senior managers in the company were faced with *their* undiscussibles. In an attempt to maintain the status quo they reacted defensively by reframing the whole event. Instead of a positive experience of constructive confrontation, much love and caring, and carefully considered decision making, they chose to describe it as a kind of mass hysteria involving emotions which were seen as damaging, and honesty which was thought to be at best risky, at worst, destructive. By a sleight of paradigm they made out that a witch hunt had taken place. Fortunately course members, together with their manager, refused to buy this, maintained the integrity of their experience, and succeeded in securing the removal of one shift leader who had been destroying team morale and threatening the career of some members.

The course was remarkable both for the range and degree of emotional competence learned and for the extent to which this was misunderstood and misinterpreted by the organisation. Senior managers took a line of least communication with the facilitators, choosing not to consult with us about what had happened, and appearing to conspire to ensure that the

follow-up day did not happen. In line with the widespread mystery-mastery view of the world they saw the fact that emotions had been expressed as not only "poor strategy", but dangerous. Denis comments on how common this view is in industry:

I don't think there's any evidence ... of feeling being addressed as beneficial, as improving business, something that makes things better if feelings are in play. It's assumed to be totally pathology if anyone lets feelings out ...

Taped conversation with Denis 12th May 1989

This experience is shared by Alan, a facilitator in local government, whose proposal for emotions-based training for his staff branded him as "*a bit loopy*" so that his manager had to work to "*restore his credibility*".

In the team building event we were the victims of our own success: both in that the organisation scapegoated us for the departure of one team member; and in that we did not anticipate how much would be achieved and the implications of this.

I am convinced that senior managers were as much confronted and discomforted by the stories of emotions being expressed on the course as by the need to address a long-standing personnel problem. Certainly there was a lot of emotion expressed, some of it painfully and not very competently, during the week. I describe energy erupting "*in a cathartic and celebratory way*" on the last day, refer to feeling "*an almost orgasmic mixture of joy, relief, amazement, fleeting moments of anxiety, pain and pride*", and comment that during the feedback session on the final afternoon "*everyone contacted tears at some point*", and "*one young lad poured eloquently into a pile of tissues throughout*". It was an experience of "group communion" (Heron 1992) and "entrainment" in which members of the group did indeed seem to "*vibrate in harmony*".

It is what goes on in an intensive and integrated group whose members have been in continuous association for a common purpose which entails openness, honesty and authenticity.

Heron 1992 p. 97

This was powerful stuff, and although the experience of that last day was a positive one for everyone present (a perception confirmed by a conversation with several team members some months later), it is small wonder that senior management found what they heard unsettling.

With hindsight I see that we could have attempted to educate senior managers in the nature and value of emotional management, but wonder if we would have been heard, and if so, whether we would have been stopped. We also neglected communication with senior management immediately after the event. At the time that would have seemed a breach of

confidentiality with the team and the manager, and disrespectful of their new sense of empowerment.

E, the transformation consultant talking of re-negotiating the meaning of emotion at an individual level, indicates what we might have been able to do at an organisational level, both with the team and with their management.

E: I can be responsible for the image I project when I cry. ... I've got this other world where people think you are a bit hopeless and a bit whippy when you cry, so I'm interested in creating an environment where I can do a bit of re-negotiating on what crying means. ... I can prove that it doesn't mean what they think it means. How I do that, I think, is by being completely OK with crying, saying, look, I'm just upset, it doesn't mean you have to worry about it. ... if it makes you feel uncomfortable, then let's talk about it.

... I think you can let people have their own judgements, but be committed to altering their perceptions as well, you can move a long way with that.

Taped conversation 19th July 1993

Another thing we neglected to do effectively was to prepare group members of this team to manage their transitions back into work and family. Some returned straight into the Friday evening shift at work, many worked over the weekend, and many had family to return to who they had not seen for nearly a week. It would have helped to give some detailed attention to who they were likely to encounter on their return, and how they would communicate the experience both to people outside the team and to absent team members. This work would also have provided a re-orienting buffer between the emotional experience and the journey home. In the event we did not manage time, or perhaps our own emotions as well as we could have, and this work was sketchy.

In many ways, however, the week could be described as an intensive course in emotional competence. We did not get it all right, but nearly all team members learnt a great deal about some or all of the following skills: expressing their own emotions; putting them on one side; communicating about emotional issues; and tolerating the expression of emotion in others; as well as the skill of supportive confrontation.

Chapter 13

Personal Presence — staying centred in the midst of conditions

In this chapter I explore the ingredients of personal presence, and how they relate to issues of group facilitation. In contrast to the uncertainty of Chapter 9, I am making the role my own, finding solutions to early problems, and developing confidence and emotional competence.

I explore three "conditions", or situations that challenge me in maintaining personal presence: working with people who find themselves oppressed by individuals, by their organization, or by social and political conditions; handling so-called "difficult" course members who threaten to disrupt the group process; and working with a co-facilitator.

As documented in Chapter 9, my problem with acquiring presence was that lack of confidence in my ability to carry the facilitation role led me to imagine challenges where there were none, for instance, in the most innocent information-seeking questions. I perceived everyone as having more *credibility* than me, even if I did not believe they were more *right*. The need to listen to and allow other people their own point of view was not a problem. On the contrary, I was too easily persuaded by others' views, and prepared to sacrifice my own.

Personal Presence

This personal presence teases me with its elusiveness — one day I have it, and I am fluent, intuitive, and inspired; the next I am stumbling, forgetful and fail to see the obvious.

Journal 14th November 1989

This personal presence is a kind of power that enables me without disabling others. I experience this in myself as a sense of inner authority and certainty, and in other facilitators as it manifests outwardly in an aura of personal presence. When facilitating it allows me to be open, vulnerable, and intuitive without threatening others, feeling threatened, or becoming paranoid; confident, convincing, grounded and relaxed when expressing my point of view; it involves being very present, alert, and other-centred, while remaining grounded and relaxed in the knowledge of what I am doing and why I am doing it. It is a presence which is permission-giving and empowers others.

The issue here is not one of maintaining control of group process, but of maintaining safety, and credibility as a trustworthy guide, and within that framework, letting go of the need to control. This has implications for how the facilitator *is* in the group rather than for what he or she *does*.

What is personal presence? A prerequisite to the sort of presence I seek is emotional competence (see Chapter 12). It is possible to have a charismatic presence without it, but this is not my aim. I have found Postle's (1992) pointers to the *absence* of emotional competence helpful in understanding my failures and difficulties and refer to these "symptoms" during my analysis of difficult conditions. First I identify three further ingredients of this personal presence: congruence, positive self-image, and vulnerability.

Congruence

Congruence is the ability to discard the defensive facade of pretending described in Chapter 9. It is a condition defined by Rogers (1967) in the context of the therapeutic relationship, and which I encountered again more recently in the principles of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). It describes a person whose inner state supports and informs their outer behaviour and manner.

By this we mean that the feelings the therapist is experiencing are available to him, available to his awareness, and he is able to live these feelings, be them, and able to communicate them if appropriate.

Rogers 1967 p. 61

Being congruent allows energy to flow freely and attention to focus out, without being pre-occupied with undisclosed inner conflict.

when all our verbal and non-verbal behaviour supports our outcome. All parts are in harmony and we have free access to our resources.

O'Connor & Seymour 1990 p145-6

O'Connor & Seymour suggest identifying a "congruence signal" that tells me I am in this state. I can readily identify a number of *incongruence* signals, but congruence is more difficult to describe, partly because congruence is a rare state which "*no-one fully achieves*" (Rogers 1967); partly because the feeling is one of *absence* of signals which contradict.

The difficulty about having an absence of discomfort as a signal is that I may simply not be noticing, my antenna may be switched off, and far from being open and congruent, I may simply be closed off. Rogers suggests that absence of fear about "being" one's feelings is part of congruence. Yet if one of the feelings I am "being" is fear, this could be confusing. Fear may be present, and admitting it may be part of being congruent. But meta-fear, that is fear of admitting I am frightened, should be absent, or at least not so strong that it prevents me from admitting my fear.

But if *all* the signs of physical tension and emotional discomfort that signal incongruence are absent, that adds up to a sense of relaxation and harmony which positively hums with delight

at the fluency and energy of well-timed interactions engaging the whole group in a dance of communication.

Congruence is really being able to be myself in any situation rather than playing a role. So true congruence in one situation would be mirrored in how I behave in all situations, having no unnecessary compartments in my life.

So when we are congruent, our beliefs, values and interests act together to give us the energy to pursue our aims.

O'Connor & Seymour 1990 p145-6

The disclosure involved in becoming vulnerable, see below, is for me a key part of achieving congruence, since it eliminates the tension of maintaining a role: there is no performance anxiety involved.

Positive Self-Image

Building the self-esteem necessary to maintain a reasonably constant belief in a positive self-image is the very antithesis of the paranoia described in Chapter 9.

In the early days of facilitating my ability to express and maintain the courage of my convictions felt hollow. My expectation that I would collapse was so strong that I am now surprised to notice that I never did. Part of the esteem-building process has been noticing that surprise, and taking my own advice to update my self-image (see Chapter 9), by acknowledging the experience and successes that I have accumulated. Another part comes from learning to like myself, care for myself, love myself, by taking time to be quietly present with myself in surroundings that are regenerative, by the sea, with trees, in touch with the elements. Yet another part is dependent on reflections from other people. I have reduced that dependency, perhaps not yet as much as I would like, but would feel both arrogant and lonely if those interactions were not contributing to my picture of myself.

Liking myself is an important pre-requisite for liking others, and without being able to like and care about group members, it would not be possible to build the safety necessary to allow them to take risks and explore their potential. Working at having a positive self-image seems to me one piece of work that a facilitator needs to do in order to achieve the “*unconditional positive regard*” (Rogers 1967 p. 283) for group members which seems just as important in facilitating groups which have any sort of self-development component as in Rogers’ one-to-one therapy.

Vulnerability

Both congruence and a positive self-image are essential pre-requisites for this third quality of vulnerability. For being vulnerable involves both self-disclosure to others, and self-examination. I will not want to risk either of these if my fear of others discovering inconsistency and inauthenticity in me is too great; or if I dislike too much of what I see in myself. However congruent and positive I try to be, it remains an uncomfortable business, however. For there will always be incongruities, actions I regret, and thoughts and feelings I would prefer not to admit to. Being vulnerable is also a good test of the water from a safety point of view. If I do not feel safe enough to make any self-disclosures it tells me that I have not created a safe environment for others. Something needs attention.

In Chapter 9 I described vulnerability as *the centred and grounded side of the coin of insecurity*. This is a concept very central to my way of being as a facilitator, and involves sharing the experience of being human. Most often I do this by using my own life experiences to illustrate theories or models. Sometimes I am also able to share the difficulties and uncertainties I am experiencing in the here and now. Whenever I am successful in this, it is widely noticed and appreciated. Being vulnerable in this way allows me to transmute my anxiety, while at the same time giving permission to others to be more fully and openly themselves.

Being vulnerable in the sense of sharing emotions and sensitivities, being open to criticism, and admitting mistakes requires strength, conviction, and overall self-confidence in the general context. It has nothing to do with not coping, being diffident and confused, or collapsing in a heap. I may show my vulnerability, but at the same time I demonstrate the possibility of remaining strong while doing that, and retain responsibility for managing that state of vulnerability myself. My aim is not to seduce a person or a group into looking after me. My purpose is rather to model openness, to create an atmosphere in which self-disclosure and problem sharing is acceptable and safe, and to give permission to group members to make such disclosures if they wish.

Arriving at the heart of what I mean by vulnerability was a difficult process involving discussion in the research group during which it became apparent that other people were using the word in ways that were subtly different.

One point of view expressed was that being vulnerable meant being open to attack and at risk of losing something valuable.

I responded that this view focused on the goal of invulnerability, whereas I was looking on vulnerability as an end in itself. On reflection I wondered if I deceived myself, since the motivation behind this research was my personal need to become sufficiently centred as a

facilitator that my effectiveness was not masked and outweighed by fear. The ultimate goal here is to become invulnerable. Isn't it? Immediately I notice that it doesn't feel right. I am trying to be logical and truthful, but my whole being shouts, "No! The ultimate is to *stay* vulnerable." And I now seem stuck with a paradox that looks like hypocrisy.

Let me change tack and try to deepen my understanding of my own perception of vulnerability.

My perception differs in the movement or direction of the transaction involved. I do not see being vulnerable as opening to incoming attack but as a movement out towards others, a gesture of *giving* or of sharing with those I am with. I am inviting others to share with me in a process of mutual exchange, opening up the potential of the group to move away from ritual activities and game-playing to the intimacy which can allow real development and change to take place. If the people in a group are willing to engage in this progressive trust-building and risk-taking process, the energy generated can move the experience, if only for short times, beyond intimacy and into the sacred. The most sustained example I have experienced of this was during the week long team building programme described in the previous chapter.

At such times powerful healing can take place. The reason that the times are often short is that the sacred demands an intimacy and openness which is unfamiliar and frightening and we cannot sustain it for very long. We get quickly overtaken by fear or shame. For what we are sharing are hurts that need healing. Some of those are very individual hurts, but we are also sharing the difficulty of being human. This kind of vulnerability is a deepening of the strategy of self-disclosure discussed in the previous chapter. The disclosure here refers to sharing the common ground of the human condition. When I show my vulnerability I am saying that we all have this problem, and that by uncovering it we can heal it.

The problem originates in the Self/Other split discussed in Chapter 9:

The Self/Other split "tricks us into believing that the Other is something to be feared" – key point. This is the mind-set that suspects manipulation in the spontaneous expression of emotion; sees the admission of fallibility or the seeking and acceptance of critical feedback as signs of weakness; and frames every situation as competition or war in which the Others are out to get us. It is the either/or situation described in Eric Berne's shorthand where either "I'm OK, and you are not OK", or "You're OK, and I'm not OK" must be true.

Writings April 1993

This view emphasises difference rather than commonality, and values the defensive use of knowledge, roles, and status at the expense of humanity; equating professionalism with keeping a safe distance, and leadership with inspiring fear.

My concern is that a facilitator using even a modified form of this behaviour, or failing to confront it, reinforces the prevailing paradigm and offers no alternative way of being. It echoes the mystery-mastery strategy identified by Argyris and Schön (1974) among college professionals:

1. Define goals and try to achieve them. ...
2. Maximize winning and minimize losing. ...
3. Minimize generating or expressing negative feelings. ...
4. Be rational. *Be objective, intellectual, suppress your feelings, and do not become emotional [pp.66-67]*

Torbert 1981 p. 174

Someone adopting this strategy sees vulnerability and weakness as the same thing, and a state to be avoided. My unquestioning submissiveness often led me into situations as a small child in which I was a victim at the mercy of others. This is a very long way from the state of vulnerability I am proposing. I experienced it as weakness and it led me to hide my feelings and pretend I didn't care. However, being tough and winning didn't appeal as a survival strategy. Being charismatic and popular did, but I was pragmatic, and was ready to settle for having a friend. A story from childhood describes the first time I took the risk of trusting another human being with my vulnerability, as opposed to allowing them to take advantage of my weakness. It taught me a life lesson about friendship.

I am ten years old, and walking home with my first chosen friend. She has two oranges and offers me one. I am tempted to refuse rather than reveal that I don't know how to peel it, but I accept and own up, and she shows me how to do it with no flicker of anything but total acceptance. On the surface this appears such a trivial incident that for years I could not understand why it was highlighted with such a golden glow in my memory.

This was also my first learning that taking risks in relationship not only works, but is necessary to their development. It is a learning that continues to nudge me forward in my experience as a facilitator, and one which I offer to others to try out in their organizational contexts.

If nobody is willing to take the risk of sharing how he or she really feels and thinks about others, about problems and issues, or the system, the result will be decreasing levels of trust, less risk-taking, less interactive learning, increasing interpersonal incompetence, and increasing victimization by external pressures.

Torbert 1981 p. 175

Susi comments on what she sees as the disadvantage of a facilitator or therapist appearing to be invulnerable.

It's a theme ... about people who seem to be together — you're the whole one and I'm the broken one. So I come to you, and the more whole you are the more lousy I feel about my fractured bits. Whereas if I really know about your fractures too, we're both able to heal each other and acknowledge our vulnerability together. [There is] something about people who are in positions of power — whether running groups, or running teams, or having patients, which makes them less trustable somehow because they seem impervious to the human condition, and they seem to lead magical lives, which of course is not true, is a complete illusion. ... But it seems really important to allow that fallibility, to be really in touch with it.

Taped conversation with Susi 25th April 1989

Not everyone chooses this approach. A number of people I have encountered think it ill-advised or “unprofessional” to make statements about feelings of uncertainty in this way.

At a workshop about styles of facilitation which I attended as a participant, I took part in a role play to practise handling a group member who was making sexist remarks. My response was to reflect back to him how I, as a woman, felt on hearing his remarks, framing this as information. Comments afterwards suggested that, by being open, I would be inviting further attack.

G talking about the role play about male chauvinism: ... [my approach] fell in the category of facilitator laying herself open, being vulnerable unnecessarily and getting hurt. ... G approached it deliberately differently by play-acting ... This allowed her to operate behind a protective mask.

Journal 19th April 1991

Others would prefer to be vulnerable, but like A, a facilitator I interviewed, identify some situations in which the personal risk is too great.

... I actually fear for me. ... I don't want too much vulnerability early on ... Where it's going to say — look I've just revealed a soft spot, anyone feel like poking it and see if they can hurt. ... some people, particularly those who are feeling very vulnerable and exposed, and feel it's dangerous, ... want to bring down the person who is apparently setting it up.

Taped conversation with A 25th April 1989

The following “pheasant incident” is an example of being poked and feeling hurt. It also demonstrates how easily such poking can undermine my resolve to be open, in spite of my strong commitment to openness. The story took place during the introductory rounds at the beginning of a Time Management course. On my way there an oncoming lorry had run over and mortally wounded a pheasant, and I had deliberately run over it a second time to put it out of its misery. I described this incident as something upsetting that I wanted to leave behind, but far from achieving that, I was reminded of it repeatedly by three jokers in the group who took as their theme that I was a danger to vulnerable creatures on the road. I failed to intercept this teasing and missed the opportunity of setting a more thoughtful tone for the course.

My journal reflections note that I probably would have intervened if it had been a course with a more specifically “personal development” agenda. But fears of being unable to take teasing, or of being thought “too heavy”, or inappropriate prevented me. On that occasion I felt vulnerable, concealed rather than admitted it, and missed an opportunity to put respect for feelings on the agenda. This account also shows the journal being a tool for change. It was uncomfortable to write about my feelings and behaviour, but doing so caused me to reflect on how I might have behaved differently, and increases the chance of trying another way in the future.

Reflecting on the incidents above and A's fears, I record that it is not my intention to lay myself open.

My aim is to feel able to reveal the hurt and to foster respect for it. Thus to move communication to a deeper level.

Journal 24th April 1991

My experience is that this strategy works

I am reminded of young men (on courses) who have had the scales fall from their eyes by being presented with vulnerability. Particularly one I lunched with who didn't “believe” the woman who cried. Didn't realize people felt hurt. He was young and confident with wide-awake hair and hadn't encountered many problems or setbacks in his life. ... This guy said he was really glad

the course had taught him this as he was afraid he had been insensitive to others and would take more care in future in the light of this revelation.

Journal 24th April 1991

Anyone, including a facilitator, who operates outside the antagonistic or impersonal paradigm, who takes up the psychological position of "I'm OK, *and* you're OK", who puts feelings on the agenda, and seeks to build a community of partnership, is offering, in Torbert's terms, "*a liberating structure*" (Torbert 1991). That such a person is likely to be seen by some people as incompetent, naive, or manipulative is part of the inevitable and "*deliberate irony*" (Torbert 1991 p. 102) of attempting such transformation. But that is only half the story. Insofar as we are all to a greater or lesser extent ensnared internally, and surrounded externally by this antagonistic perception of reality, we are likely to espouse one paradigm whilst falling into the other; to be less than clear in our purpose and our statements of intent; and to produce confused and defensive behaviours which open us to such criticism.

This brings me to a final aspect of vulnerability which is the ability to be open to constructive feedback. This is particularly vital in view of the difficulty of "getting it right" just described. Torbert warns that a liberating structure is at risk of failure if it "*behaves inauthentically*" through incongruence in its tasks, processes, and purposes *and* it "*refuses to acknowledge and correct such incongruities*". Some feedback may come from self-reflective journaling, but needs balancing by comments from others, students, or colleagues. It helps to guard against too much openness becoming self-indulgent rather than catalytic; or too little openness becoming defensive or controlling. It helps to maintain a balance where presence is used to project a message effectively, but stops short of an overwhelming and charismatic performance which fails to pause and listen. Torbert (1991 p. 104) describes such a leadership which shows "*appropriate strength, vulnerability, and integrity from moment to moment*" as enabling of development.

From Victim to Power

Much of my work is concerned with the management of change, either in team building sessions where this is an explicit brief, as an underlying agenda when running courses in organizations where change is taking place, or when individuals bring their own personal agenda of effecting changes in their lives. In many cases the people I work with are struggling to cope with the effects of badly managed or unwelcome change. They are suffering from a lack of consultation, information, recognition or choice, and see themselves as victims. Feelings in these circumstances run high, and my aim is to help people understand why they feel so bad, and give them the opportunity to vent their emotions. This agenda runs alongside a typical brief of achieving a positive outcome, and planning ahead.

This, of course, is not always possible, but is an improvement on warnings from the organization against any attempt to vent feelings as much too risky a venture.

One way I work with people in such situations is to help them to move out of victim mode, and to release their energy to take control and make things happen differently. However, in organizations that do not honour the individual I have to recognize that the politically powerful or frightened people in the organization constantly put them right back in that victim position, by failing to recognize achievement or even existence, by withholding information, moving the goal posts, and undermining confidence. Moving out of the victim position is hindered not only by the low levels of self-esteem and high levels of despair in such groups, but by fear of retribution in the form of loss of job or longer term career prospects.

Sometimes these fears are imaginary, just as some cynicism is unfounded and can be dispersed, but in the more severe cases I have found that they are real, and that what I imagined was cynicism was in fact realism. I have found these attitudes and conditions in education establishments, among teams of social workers, both field and residential workers, and in large commercial companies. In the multi-cultural Returning to Work group many members have similar problems of a social or political kind, experiencing discrimination because they are poor, refugees, black, or female, or all four.

A, another facilitator, expresses the dangers of this kind of organizational control and the cost to the individual in terms of stress:

We are going through restructuring ... the control issues are incredible. Power games, lack of information, disregard for people's anxieties.

... I'm in a situation where to rant and rave should be a normal part of every day. To crash around and break things up and throw things through windows, certain people I think as well. And it would be a perfectly normal thing to do. What I do is go around controlled. I meet people who say they also feel so frustrated, angry about the way people are being depowered. Being told what they will do and how to do it. This sense of ascending hierarchy, and with it goes wisdom, clarity and all the rest of it.

... The effort of coding the messages in ways that will be politically acceptable becomes a very big strain.

...the people who have been looking for power, who hate my guts ... have got into top positions. ...there is something about me controlling all this kind of what I regard as unfairness, this, cold bureaucracy that I need to shout and rave about. And I rarely do. ... Because in terms of control, what I lock up with all of that is a lot of joy.

Taped conversation 25th April 1989

A contrasts this with the independence of the bees that he keeps in his garden:

I think there's something about the bees that is really symbolic about it all. ... they have a kind of natural way of responding. ... with bees if you try to control them by squashing 'em and forcing them to do things, they'll die or they'll go off somewhere.

Taped conversation 25th April 1989

A took a lesson from the bees and left his job in local government a year later to become self-employed.

People who see themselves as being at the mercy of other people's behaviour and powerless to influence the situation complain about a wide range of oppressors: managers who fail to appreciate, recognise, inform, direct, or empower their staff; managers who undermine, manipulate, and mislead people; faceless directors of large organizations who fail to listen, consult, or respond to communications sent upward; male partners who abuse and oppress the mothers of their children; children who manipulate and bully their parents and social workers; parents who dominate grown children's lives; doctors who don't listen to their patients ... The list is endless.

I notice that in many situations in large organizations, this mirrors my own situation because my work is with people who are either in the middle or at the bottom of the organizational pile, and have little status or means of influencing how the organization operates. I can therefore feel frustrated that the difference I can make, when working in this "bottom-up" direction is negligible in organizational terms. "Top-down" initiatives can of course also fail if they are seen to be imposed from on high. Movement from both directions is most effective, a willingness to consult, and ownership of solutions, but this debate is not my concern here.

Because my strengths and interest lie in individual development rather than in systemic change, I took some time to notice and "grow into" the frustration about failing to make a difference. This focus on the personal also led me to overlook the potential dilemma for students who had learnt skills and taken courage to try new behaviours which turned out to be unacceptable in their places of work. Their disappointment, reported back to me at follow-up sessions, led me to consider how such behaviour changes need to be framed and presented (see Chapter 10) in order to increase the chances of success.

I will now describe my work with groups whose members have largely experienced themselves as victims. They fall into two categories:

Ad hoc groups whose members have come from different departments in an organization for a session on team building or assertiveness and who disclose and share the "victim" experience of life in their organization while exploring issues of motivation.

Teams in crisis who are meeting with me explicitly to deal with the pain and stress caused by a specific trauma, and to go on to build their team for the future.

A third group are members of the public who enrol on a "Fresh Start" course for unemployed people who are an ad hoc group as far as structure and origin is concerned, but who have so many common issues that they tend to bond quickly and function more as a team. They have all the benefits of a common history of issues, and none of the tensions of a shared interpersonal history.

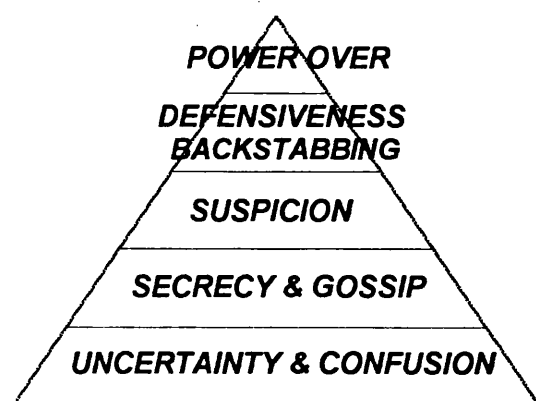
In this context I found my focus on the personal to be relevant and useful. Encouraging people to work together to influence the politics of the organization, is irrelevant to the point of being misleading, unless they have the personal sense of worth necessary to conceive of such a possibility. What is more they are caught in a vicious spiral where their lack of power, both personal and political mirror and reinforce each other. The need here is, to borrow a phrase from John, a consultant colleague, to allow the "I can't": that is, to help them to acknowledge and face the extent of their helplessness and despair, and to express the grief, fear, and anger which that produces.

Allowing the "I can't"

The most important purpose during this first phase is to allow some catharsis of emotions which I believe is necessary before healing can take place. This releases the energy trapped in the feelings and frees it for action.

If I am working with an ad hoc group, this process usually begins when I introduce the set of models described in Chapter 12. The Safety Pyramid usually prompts disclosure of a strongly contrasting view of the organization held by most people. What they see is a hierarchy of horrors, or the pyramid of the unsafe environment:

Pyramid of the unsafe environment



A common response is relief that the intensity of despair that they feel is normal. It is not so much an "aha" of triumphant discovery as an "oh" of dawning understanding that runs through the group. For some, dubious about the value of "dragging all this up again", it is depressing; others comment cynically "so what?" because nothing will ever change; yet others are angry and dive back into blaming.

These negative feelings need an outlet if progress is to be made to a more constructive position.

The timing of this cathartic stage is both critical, and difficult to manage because it is an essentially unpredictable process which needs to take as long as it needs to take. It is crucial that there is time after it for a break and a session of positive rebuilding of morale before people go home. The break needs to be long enough and informal enough to allow for dispersal, and the opportunity for reflection and digestion, either singly or in small groups over coffee or a walk outside.

Moving out of Victim

Having allowed space for the expression of negative emotions, the aim of the next phase of work is for each individual to start building their personal presence, and for the group as a whole to emerge into recognising the potential for synergy which they can use either within the group to feel better, or outside the group as a force for change.

Using the unmet needs of the Love, Understanding, and Freedom triangle (see Chapter 12) as a focus for understanding why the situation feels so bad, brings some clarity out of the confusion, and offers a transition from feeling helpless to taking control.

In the Love and Recognition corner individuals plan programmes of self-nurture and groups identify ways in which they can appreciate, nurture, and support each other.

In the Understanding and Communication corner groups identify information required, and questions to ask; consider how to frame and present these, and to whom, using Torbert's four communication categories (Fisher and Torbert 1995 pp. 34-6); attend to reframing situations and forms of language; and work creatively to bring forms of intelligence other than the logical to bear on problems.

In the Freedom and Control corner individuals and groups use Covey's (1992) Circles of Concern and Influence to consider what is outside their control, and what is either directly or indirectly within their sphere of influence; consider how they use that influence and whether they need other skills such as assertiveness or presentation skills to exercise it effectively.

In theory this is a multi-layered approach to achieving empowerment, but in practice I often find it hard to believe in it in the face of the despair and cynicism I encounter. Not only do many people seem to cling almost obstinately to the victim position, apparently finding it impossible to reframe their situation, but situations *are* sometimes intractable, and people are reluctant to settle for feel-better measures when they know that there are no solutions. It has taught me much about Postle's (1992) fifth emotional competence concerning oppression

(see Chapter 12). At first I think I was inappropriately optimistic, and consequently felt a sense of failure at not being able to “make it better”. Managing my own state of mind, and maintaining faith in human resilience without being unrealistically optimistic is a difficult balancing act.

Challenging Group Members

The art of confrontation, involving at least Postle’s third, fourth and sixth emotional competences (concerning early experiences, projection, and supportive confrontation), has been one of the hardest lessons I have had to learn. When I first started facilitating groups I felt more confronted at every turn than capable of confronting, and grew that confidence gradually. I relied heavily on “noddies and smilers” to feed my confidence and keep me flowing. I still look for such confirmation, but can now look upon its absence as information, an indication that I need to attend more closely to the communication, maybe framing my intentions more clearly, or exploring the group’s objectives.

Other steps into greater confidence were welcoming questions as evidence of interest, rather than fearing them as challenges; becoming comfortable negotiating a creative way forward with course members who were not fully engaging with group activities; and accepting rather than avoiding the need to confront course members who were in some way disrupting the process of the group.

I can follow this progress over a period of about seven years, from early 1988 when I first journalled about paranoia, to comments when teaching the knowledge engineering (HSKE) course in Rio later that year, through the experience of successive personal development courses in the commercial setting, to a more systematic examination of my process for dealing with difficult behaviour in groups for a train the trainers (TTT) course in 1993, to noticing my increased confidence and skill during a difficult confrontation in Spring 1995.

I will start by describing the model of my own process which became explicit and articulated in response to the question “how do you deal with difficult people?” asked on the TTT course. I came to it by examining what I had done in the past and will illustrate that below with my notes from teaching the HSKE course in Rio.

The SWIG Model

The steps of my process had the initials SWIG which I used as a mnemonic.

- Self** Is the problem in me or out there?
 Manage own feelings, suppress paranoia.
 Use intuition.
 Check Identity. Who does this person remind me of?
- Why** Is there a practical reason for this? Ask about circumstances.
 Apply Love, Understanding, and Freedom triangle (see Chapter 12).
 Assume "they are doing the best they can with what they've got".
 Consult, discuss, role play, meta-mirror with colleague.
- Interact** Show interest, listen to their story, meet the real person.
 Draw attention to, raise awareness of behaviour.
 Invite mutual problem-solving, negotiate assertively.
- Group** Make metacommunication about group process and energy
 Balance needs of individual/group.
 Invite group to share decision making in context of ground rules.
 Use the group's support — "group-ally".
 If someone leaves, check and acknowledge group feelings.

The stages of this process do not all need to be followed, nor do they follow a particular order, except that the Self needs to come first. A number of critical incidents in groups and particularly the week teaching in Rio illustrate how this process came to evolve.

The first stage of *Self* came from the understanding that many of the "managing difficult people" problems could be dealt with inside my own head by invoking the third and fourth emotional competence, and that I was one of the most difficult people I would ever have to manage. My co-counselling training was invaluable in developing these competences and in alerting me to how many apparently external problems could be due to what Postle calls "*emotional trip wires*" from the past, and reminders of people with whom there is unfinished business. Working with other people helped me to recognize my own projections. In separate teaching partnerships with Sara, Bob, and John, we have each from time to time discovered that a person we were finding "difficult" was not presenting a problem to our colleague. Often the "difficult" person was reminding us of someone who presented a challenge on a previous course or in another time and place in our lives.

Unless I recognize this I have a natural tendency to avoid the person. Once the source of discomfort is identified, my solution is to engage them deliberately in conversation (the *Interact* stage) in order to dispel the unpleasant associations with the past. Only once has this failed. A woman attending a course bore a strong physical resemblance to someone with whom I had had a tense and unpleasant relationship for many years. The more I got to know

her, the more she seemed similar in personality as well as looks, and my co-trainer was also having difficulty with her negative and critical attitude. The exercise was useful, however, in that it was easier to *accept her negative attitude* than to carry an inappropriately strong and *personal dislike* of her through the course which I might otherwise have done.

Illustrations of the SWIG model in Rio

A series of journal notes from the week in Rio describe my fears about two women, D and A, in the group:

... it is significant that it was the two most high-powered women that I chose to be scared of – D and A.

D partly because she looked powerful. She arrived late with no glance in our direction and several people rose to greet her with hugs and kisses. And then in the afternoon she was gone, again with no reference to us. ...

A ... has not voiced anything in the class to worry me, it's just how she looks and I suspect I would solve it by talking to her one to one. The anxiety is that I might find it was real and that would make it worse.

Journal 27th July 1988

Next I notice a problem with the left side of the room where several swarthy men are sitting.

I notice that I have been having difficulty including one side of the room in my attention. ... a number of contributory factors to this:

- 1. I had more difficulty with the names on that side ...*
- 2. They are all men.*
- 3. The complaint about language came from over there ...*
- 4. D was sitting on that side, and he ...left. ... said nothing to us about it,... He is also one of the professors.*

The feelings I had about them are:

They are the unknown, So I am frightened. But particularly in M's case I am frightened of him because I sense he is frightened of me. Which is very different from being frightened of A because she looks fierce, or D because she is high-powered, and obviously has a following. I suppose it is because I don't know how to make it OK for M. In A's case I don't know how to make it OK for me. Either way I am ... facing ... my own inadequacy.

Journal 27th July 1988

I also record some outcomes:

Talking to D dispelled my worries ... by focusing on the reality which had kept her away, enquiring about her health ... rather than my paranoia about her absence and consequent anxiety at her return. She was pleased at my interest. We had a warm exchange which moved beyond the teacher/student roles.

With C (one of the dark men) I approached him ... and discovered a warm, friendly human being who was disconcerted by my request; not a hostile male. There were similar encounters with other members of that "left-side" group with similar results. I never talked to M, but noticing him as a loner who liked walking in the grounds watching the birds, showed him in a more real light.

As for A, I never did speak to her and the problem never resolved. I would still be wary of her if I met her again. I think I should have spoken to her in the coffee break and said I was worried that the course was not being useful to her. Frustrating to think I will never know what would have happened. Interesting that I say "what would have happened", not "what she would have said", as if I expected a scene, that she would walk away or spit in my face. Which of course at one level is exactly what I do expect.

*PS. D came back on the last day, and made a point of apologising for leaving without a word, and of appreciating what he had experienced of the class, expressing regret that he had had to miss most of it. Surprise, surprise. It is so rare that my bad fantasies are correct, **Why** do I continue to entertain them???*

Journal 26th August 1988

Bob my co-facilitator, meanwhile spoke of his vulnerability to the criticism mainly of the women:

Bob: *"They (B and V, and others like them) appeal to me, I open up, and then they stab me in the back. I've cut off from the dark men, I'm defended against them and they don't have the power to hurt me. But from B and V I don't defend myself. So even just a little bit of criticism really hurts and I get very childish. Like my mummy slapped me when I wasn't expecting it. There's a lot of grief there, right on the surface. I could easily cry.*

"I have given a lot of power to other people here — M and C [two quiet women] — but they haven't used it against me. If C came in with a criticism I would keel over and die. The power I give these people astounds me. On Tuesday morning I was physically really ill. Just a little bit of criticism made me physically ill. And my recovery did not come from taking my power back. It came from B patting me on the head."

Journal 27th July 1988

We were picking up on a powerful “undercurrent of resistance and impatience”, and discovered that this was not all paranoia. B, an articulate, outspoken woman challenged us about our facilitative teaching style on the first day. By talking to her outside of the course I uncovered some background to this. The course was over-subscribed which we had wrongly ascribed to poor administration. It emerged that our visit was a prestigious event, and high status people had insisted on attending, which accounted for the presence of a formidable number of “PhDs” and professors. B explained her ambivalence:

... she had been impatient on the first day and thought that she wasn't going to learn anything; ... D had taken her to task in the exercise for being a "fille méchante"; that her impatience was to do with the "under-developed" mentality which expects us from the west, ... to come with all the magic answers. She couldn't cope with us being fallible and not having answers.

Journal 27th July 1988

Given these expectations, it is no wonder that these students experienced our facilitative and experiential approach as manipulative. They felt we were playing games with them, deliberately withholding our expert knowledge. Meanwhile we were overwhelmed and intimidated by the weight of academia and, far from thinking of Brazil as an under-developed country, were concerned that these people were an inappropriately over-qualified audience for what we had to offer. We therefore interpreted their resistance to our style as scorn.

Two facilitators, A and M, each note the irony in similar examples of groups not used to being autonomous experiencing shifts in that direction as manipulation:

For those who have been through controlled groups it's quite scary when it appears that the control has gone. For them, (odd really) because the control has gone there is more manipulation than if it was controlled. I guess the word "manipulation" is a way of expressing quite a powerful discomfort that the structure has gone, and that the agenda has moved from a given agenda to a self-generated agenda. And that sense of "the only material is the material I can provide, or what others can provide" has that level of threat in it that makes them feel manipulated.

Taped conversation with A 25th April 1989

M notes how openness on the part of a facilitator may similarly be misinterpreted:

So even when you are being open and honest people will perceive it in their own frame of reference. And if their frame of reference is "I can't be open and honest, I have to manipulate people" — whenever you are open and honest, they look for manipulation in it.

Taped conversation with M 9th May 1989

This paradox is echoed in Torbert's work with students (Torbert 1981 p. 182) where "*attempts to learn the inquiring mode may often make people feel as if they are losing control altogether.*" On many courses, as on the Rio HSKE referred to above, students were "forced to be free" (Torbert 1991 p.107). They showed strong resistance when offered such unaccustomed freedom to direct their own process of learning, experiencing it as being both controlled and abandoned because they had no frame of reference for such activity.

Thus openness and metacommunication, commenting on this process, its purpose, and desired outcomes (of deeper, participative knowledge, and ownership of the process) is a critical intervention, allowing this agenda and awareness to be shared so that the group can move beyond the impression of being manipulated.

These extracts have illustrated the *Self* and *Interact*, and to some extent the *Why*, stages of the SWIG process. The *Why* stage often simply consists of discovering that someone is very pre-occupied by some personal or work crisis and needs to give it some attention before they are able to be fully present, as for instance, D in Rio who left the group to keep a hospital appointment. In Rio the *Why* stage at a group level was very complex, and involved linguistic, cultural, and political issues. The *Interact* process was critical in uncovering these.

What is striking about the Rio experience is 1) how far apart we were from the group at the start; 2) how unaware we were of why this was; 3) how easy it was to resolve this once we took the risk of sharing feelings and making metacomments about what was happening; 4) how easy it would have been not to have taken that risk, to have remained in ignorance, and failed to reach each other.

Confronting a group member

A particularly difficult confrontation I made recently, in 1995, demonstrates the use of the "*Group (as) ally*" in the SWIG process. Dick and his friend arrived on a personal development course in jocular mood and passed verbal and non-verbal messages across the room during the first part of the morning. Dick's friend quickly calmed down and started to participate seriously after the culture setting, leaving Dick without a sparring partner. Dick was highly intelligent, very self-confident, and exercised his right not to participate, but in such a way that made it uncomfortable for others. When I spoke to him at lunch time he was defensive and denied having any problem, but in the afternoon he was more engaged, appeared to enjoy it and took part in everything. Next morning, however, he was clearly pre-occupied and proceeded to opt out once more, until I challenged him quite strongly in the group about the effect of his behaviour on the safety of the group for other people. When I started to negotiate with him, other members of the group, led by his friend, stated their

objections to his behaviour and their wish that he should leave. During the coffee break Dick made the decision not to return and the group took on a new lease of life.

In this case the group empowered me to act, felt powerful themselves, and were fully aware of what happened and why as a result. If I had tackled the problem outside of the group, however good my motivation, I could have fallen into mystery-mastery behaviour (see above Torbert 1981) and mystified the outcome for other group members, as well as remaining in control. There is a danger in using the group-as-ally in this way in that statements can turn into attacks, and the oppressor, in this case Dick, can become the victim. I intervened to stop this happening although Dick himself protested that he was enjoying it.

At the follow-up to this course I heard from Dick's colleague that they had a long discussion on his return to work and that Dick's behaviour had changed. They were now friends again, Dick was managing his moods, had made known his need for private space, and had even wanted to attend the follow-up, which his friend had nevertheless vetoed.

I had no doubt even at the time that I had acted in the interest of everyone, including Dick, but his non-participation presented me with a dilemma. When does one person's right not to participate start to impact on the needs of others?

S's comment illustrates the fine line between internal and external pressure to participate. She says it comes from within, but refers to the influence of others:

Jill created an atmosphere in which there was no external pressure to participate in discussions and exercises, but the openness of the others made me feel that it was selfish not to be open and honest myself. Any pressure that I felt came from myself.

Written notes from S after the workshop of March 1990

I would not want to put more pressure on people like S. Nevertheless for the Dicks of this world I see a need to qualify assurances that there will be no pressure to participate. I could add four riders, only the first of which I have regularly included before.

1. Ask yourself why you are opting out. What does this tell you about yourself?
2. Consider what impact your opting out will have on other people.
3. Try suspending judgement to consider how this exercise might be of interest to you.
4. If you find you are opting out of a high proportion of activities, you may consider that this is not where you want to be.

In a way this incident with Dick marked a coming of age for me in two ways. It was not so much that I handled it well, and feedback from every member of the group confirmed my own judgement in that, but that I did it spontaneously at the time when it needed to happen, and

that at no stage did the situation trigger my paranoia. Certainly it had been in my mind beforehand that I might have to confront Dick, but I had planned neither the occasion nor the words I would use. I note in my journal that I took myself by surprise:

I suddenly hear myself tackling it and think, oh, so we're doing this now. I feel myself go hot but have no doubt in my mind or hesitation in my voice or words.

Journal 5th April 1995

One further reflection occurred to me on this subject. I had turned down a request to take a trainee facilitator to this course as an assistant, and wondered if I would have managed so well if this other person had been present. There is of course no way of knowing how the whole group dynamic would have been affected, but I was both relieved at how things had turned out, and aware of other challenges still to be met. These issues are explored in the next section.

Working with Others

In this section I look at three aspects of working partnerships: my reluctance to lead; division of labour; and gender differences.

In the early days of facilitating I worked almost exclusively with one other person, under whose guidance I had learnt to teach co-counselling. This was Bob who also supported my move into the commercial arena via a course (HSKE) which we developed and taught together. In co-counselling we had achieved a peer partnership and mutual respect, and I had gained both the confidence, experience, and the accreditation to work independently. With HSKE, however, it was clear that Bob was the leader and I was the learner, both in terms of subject matter and confidence. Although I grew in confidence in that role, it nevertheless became an issue for me to find a chance to work independently in the commercial setting to prove that I could do it.

Reluctance to Lead

Since first working independently I have known that I am at my personal best when on my own in the facilitator role. My tendency to be dependent on others is triggered by anyone who is willing or eager to take the leading role, whereas if I am working solo there is no doubt that the responsibility is all mine and I rise to the occasion accordingly. Most of the people I have worked with own a preference for being the leader, and also to becoming over-controlling or over-analytical of group process when under pressure. By contrast I am happier in the role of assistant, and tend to "give my power away" when I am assisted by someone I perceive as competent and strong.

When working with others I am too much guided by their opinion, be it out of politeness or for reassurance, rather than focusing on my own instincts. I am thrown into doubt if I cannot readily articulate my strategy when asked for it. It seems to demonstrate that I do not have one, but I am expected to have one, should have one, and am therefore found wanting. If I claim that I will only know my intention at the point of action, I experience a sneaking fear that this might not be so. In which case I am most likely to seek another opinion as insurance against this eventuality. If a colleague then continues to discuss their ideas and strategy, I tend to cede my inarticulate position to their apparently superior certainty. That leaves me bound to "fail": if their solution does not work I feel a failure for not asserting my approach and my right to hold that part of the process; if their solution succeeds I am relieved, but have a hollow feeling which doubts that I could have managed without them, at the same time as being disappointed not to have tried my idea.

It is interesting that the presence of either a friend or a colleague in the *audience* has not had the same disabling effect. This has happened both with experienced facilitators and others, and while the prospect may have been intimidating, the experience was not. The discovery that an unknown member of the audience was an experienced facilitator has similarly been challenging but only very temporarily.

The problem only arises in sharing the facilitator role. I thought at first that this presence interfered with my ability to pick up what was going on in a group until I noticed that I must have collected that information because I was able to work out afterwards what I would have liked to do. It was as if the messages arrived in scrambled form and the presence of the other either caused the scrambling or interfered with my ability to decode them.

I identify two factors in my reluctance to take the lead, one is having a strong personality as a co-facilitator; the other is the presence of a dual agenda or being unclear about my role.

Strong Personalities

All the time I was in a learning role I could justify taking a back seat when co-facilitating. However, when I chose to involve new facilitators in my own courses so that they could run them in my absence the situation was very different, and confronted me with my failure to take charge. When Susi, A, and Bob joined me on separate occasions as assistants on my presentation and time management skills courses all this was different. I owned the courses, had run them many times, and knew Susi and Bob very well, and A quite well, although I had not worked with Susi or A. I therefore held all the strong cards, and yet somehow failed to step into the leading role. I will use the experience with Susi to illustrate this.

I was sufficiently anxious about working with Susi to have a counselling session beforehand in which metaphors of porous boundaries emerged. I had planned to "be fair" and share the

work of the course, feeling that it would be arrogant not to. My counsellor commented that “*I seemed to be wanting to give it all away*”. I recognised a pattern of under-valuing my skills and achievements, and of “power illiteracy” (Wolf 1993). In this session I decided instead, that my purpose should be to model the course, and came away with the direction to “*stay centred in the midst of conditions*”.

My journal records a low ebb of energy: “energy draining out of a hole in my back”, and my acupuncturist commented that my water energy was fine, but that water was out of control like a river with no banks, hence escaping energy, an image that echoed the message from the counselling session to be clearer about boundaries.

In the event I tended to give up and sink into invisibility rather than compete with Susi’s powerful personal presence. This happened less with A, but in both cases I noticed that if I initiated a discussion in the group, all the responses tended to be addressed to Susi or A as if I were not there or had not spoken. I would start to feel jealous and resentful, inadmissible feelings which shut me down further:

... feeling overwhelmed by her positive outgoing energy and struggling unsuccessfully not to compare myself unfavourably. ... She seems compelled to take over or I feel that way. Maybe I have offered it and regretted it when it shows up my poverty! She is good, the fantasy that she would do it better than me is come true! I have to accept that, but/and not feel diminished. ... I allow her ebullience to flatten, deflate, eclipse me. The “answer” is not that she should hold back, but that I should also be strong, not in the same way but in my way. ... Had a nasty thought that I’d prefer to teach with someone “mousier” so I could be ebullient and flourish.

Journal 17th October 1989

Journalling about this enabled me both to take a more balanced view and to discuss the situation with Susi.

Susi has more extrovert energy than I have, projects herself and her ideas with more confidence, is articulate and has the gift of expanding and playing around a subject ... Her diagnostic and coaching skill is also quick and deft. She’s stronger on the outgoing messages than I am.

All of which enhanced the facilitation of the course ...

On the other hand I think I am stronger on the incoming messages and more sensitive to where people are. She also didn’t tune into me very well.

... I got some space to have ideas ... Felt the course was refreshed by things that she did, and was encouraged to add bits. Also validated, reassured, and encouraged by her support in the things I was already doing.

Journal 19th October 1989

Susi herself had had a similar experience co-facilitating when she was ill, and describes how she reframed her initial reaction.

I wasn't thinking and functioning properly. I didn't have any coherence ... my fluency totally left me. ... my sense of confidence was just gone. I felt so low.

... and [her colleague] carried the event with such aplomb and style and confidence, and I went through quite a struggle — the better she is the worse I feel. No ... I can just say "thank god she can do this so well and doesn't feel let down, and carries me". So I made that switch inside me, it's not competition, it's co-operation here.

... I said "I really want you to know how much I admire you", ... and it felt really wonderful to be able to do that. ... To be able to tell her, ... and not to feel it was diminishing me. That was a major turning point.

Taped conversation with Susi 25-4-89

Susi's learning from that experience was *"that it was OK to fall apart"*. Admitting her own fallibility, and both her jealousy and appreciation of her colleague caused a turning point, not only in her relationship with her colleague, but also in Susi's competence and ownership of her power in her own role: *"my energy came back — just like putting the plug back in."*

When reviewing the experience of working together after each event Susi, A, and Bob all admitted to preferring the leader role. Susi and Bob had difficulty in taking a secondary or learning role, while A was tempted to control the process of a group, for instance during discussion activities.

A concern raised many times by Bob and shared by Susi is that a strong personality should not be expected to tone down their ebullience in order to accommodate someone who is less confident. With the proviso that ebullience needs to be balanced with awareness of others and the ability to listen, I would agree with this. I know that I have the potential for presence and competence; I realize that others may see me that way even when I do not feel it myself; and I accept responsibility for using or not using that presence and competence. It is for me to find ways of doing that by developing Postle's (1992) ninth criteria of emotional competence.

Balancing Agendas

When analysing what is different about teaching co-counselling, where I am much happier to lead, and commercial courses where I find it difficult or impossible, I noticed that in co-counselling I work with a much clearer agenda. Nearly all students come with a commitment to work on themselves and to learn how to do that. Admittedly that is a double agenda and some tension exists between covering all the skills and using them to do personal work; but those agendas interrelate and share the same focus which is unequivocally on the personal.

In commercial courses there is both a “business task” and a “personal development” agenda. Some students may be solely focused on learning the business-related skill, and find it difficult to see the relevance of the other agenda to this learning. Others may come with both agendas, or may only be interested in the personal development agenda; still others may be surprised that a personal development agenda exists.

So there is a juggling and a balancing act to be performed in presenting these agendas (see Chapter 10) in ways that do not alienate the wary, and that engage most people most of the time. In co-working there is another set of variables to add to the act — the other facilitator’s balancing of those agendas and their judgements about which agenda to focus on at any particular moment. We may not synchronize, and their judgements may push me off the course that seems right to me.

The HSKE course, which was my first major experience in the commercial environment, had a marked dual focus: on developing a piece of information technology; and on learning to involve technically naive human beings in that process. It attracted many technical experts who were highly resistant to the “human” agenda. In that case Bob and I carried separate responsibility for the two agendas which made the task easier. Even so there were times when I had difficulty upholding my human agenda in the face of heavy resistance and strong interest in the particularly seductive technology.

When the business and personal agendas are less clear cut and separate the balancing is more difficult, and happens from moment to moment, rather than being built in to the plan of activities for the day. If I have doubts about focusing on the personal agenda and my co-facilitator chooses not to, it is even more difficult to listen to the internal voice that tells me it is an important part of the learning process.

Division of Labour

These reflections led me to wonder how the arrangements for dividing the work between facilitators affects my ability to maintain presence. These have varied from what I would

describe as interactive synergy at one extreme, and working in parallel at the other. Stages in between have usually involved dividing work according to experience and expertise.

Interactive synergy

This style of working as a double act, characterised by a flow of communication and an easy sharing of “up front” and “back seat” roles has, not surprisingly, happened with the people I knew best, Bob and Sara.

When my working partnership with Bob was at its best we achieved a fluent and creative synergy which created a climate where people could take risks and grow, and where ideas flourished. Groups appreciated the interweaving of two very different styles and personalities which re-inforced a message we might be conveying by showing it in varying lights. I felt certain enough of the understanding between us that it did not pre-occupy me. Only later, when that understanding became patchy and unpredictable, did our patterns of dependency and control conspire to shut us off, both internally from our own power, from each other, and from the group. Before that, however, the partnership taught me an enormous amount, and without Bob I would probably not be doing the work I do or writing this thesis.

The story of my working relationship with Sara is very different. I think this is partly because we both came to it with the confidence born of a well-established track record in our own field; partly because we each felt unsure in the other's territory and had something to learn. We have developed courses together, and have shared ownership and delivery of programmes jointly offered. We also recognize in each other different and complementary strengths and skills and compensate for each other's weaknesses. We have both occasionally felt that the other was shining while we were struggling and failing, and there have been minor irritations along the way. But the relationship has been free of major conflict and we have always been able to be open with each other with our feelings as they arose.

I was shocked to notice at that point that I had no more to say about working with Sara, but this is only true in the context of this chapter's themes. We cleared issues between us of feeling deskilled by each other early on when reviewing past history. In groups Sara and I tend toward over-control and under-control respectively, and monitor each other to check whether we are responding to our own or the group's needs.

When I mentioned to Sara that I was writing about our relationship in the context of a chapter about power and control issues, she surprised me with this fax:

“What would Sara have said about power and control ref. working with Jill”

The word that came to mind was "worlds"; seeing us deeply, continuously tho' not consciously connected for all the years that we have known one another. And that we have started from a connected place and chosen, or been blown into different worlds — you the world of heart and spirit, of magic and mystery — me into the world of heads and their products: theories and applications and systematic analysis.

And the early foundation of trust and security enabled us to say (metaphorically you understand) take my hand, walk in my shadow, come and inhabit my world; let it see you and your special gifts and let me show it to you.

And so we have shared our power, not used it to discredit or dominate — and we have enlisted our capacity to control our worlds and our ideas so as to make them less alien, frightening to one another.

Fax from Sara 10-4-95

Sara knew nothing of what I had written when she sent this, and we commented, not only on our synchronous views but on the very different means of expression. Our learning from each other had produced what amounted to a style reversal!

A feature of my work with Sara is the natural flow, both of responsibility for group process, and of the ideas we use as a framework. This easy movement to and fro characteristically starts in the planning stages, and continues through a programme with only rare hiccups.

Working in parallel

Working in parallel is a very different approach which I have experienced in two different ways. One has tended to "happen" — when I have found myself attending to the process of a group in which a co-facilitator was working simultaneously at a task level. I am shortly *planning* to work in this way with a Board of Directors, having noticed how effective it can be in surfacing and addressing critical communication issues which may otherwise be avoided.

The other way of working in parallel is in the sense of parallel lines which do not meet, where tasks are allocated and there is no interaction between facilitators other than the minimum necessary for handover.

I am surprised at how difficult I found this arrangement, given my need not to be pre-occupied with the other person. My experience of this was with R who prefers to work alone, and has very clear boundaries, in contrast to my too porous boundaries described above. His style has a quality that I have short-handed "imperviousness" which has some powerful strengths. R makes a clean switch between being "on" or "off", and tends not to interact with a co-facilitator in either mode. He purposefully follows a plan or the thread of an argument with single-minded concentration,

I reflect that R has found a way of protecting his personal power by filtering out anything that might intentionally or unintentionally sabotage it. He puts himself beyond the reach of influence, and, by the same token, he himself makes no attempt to influence. R stands firmly in his territory, speaking clearly from that position. I see a useful lesson here in avoiding dependency, and wonder whether my dependency needs were at the root of my frustration.

His style is the very antithesis of my paranoia, and enables R to power through the courage of his convictions. There are pros and cons of both approaches. In my concern to start where people are I run the risk of colluding with them; in his single-minded filtering R may miss information about the group's tolerances. This may however be balanced by his willingness to circulate among people during exercises and engage with people one to one.

On both occasions I worked with him (once early in my facilitation career, and once relatively recently) I tried to accept this as a difference of style that I should be able to accommodate. Certainly it is a valid and effective style, but I do not have to be able to do it. It has simply taught me that I prefer either to work alone, or to work with someone in an interactive way.

Whenever I criticise in this way I fear that I am wanting to be right, rather than illustrating equally valid approaches. It is a struggle to get away from the either-or view that says either I must accommodate to this style, or it must be wrong. In this case I also fear that my criticism springs from mean envy that having the courage of his convictions carries R through. He heads for the rocks, hits them head on, but appears not to lose anyone overboard. The fact that they may be thrown into anger or fear, as they were when I was with him, may be no bad thing. Maybe I avoid the confrontation of values and expectations too much.

Gender Differences

I have wondered about the gender differences in these working partnerships. At first I was tempted to declare that there were no differences according to gender, and that I had just as much problem working with women as with men. But then I did notice a subtle difference in the *nature* of the problem between the two. Although I resent it if I think a man is exploiting me, I tend to accept it with more equanimity if I consider him more skilled than I am. Certainly socialisation taught me that it is more "natural" for me to be less skilled in a public role and play a secondary role to a man, and however much I may deny that tendency and whitewash it with assertive resolve, that belief is dyed in, leeching my confidence and bleeding into my behaviour.

If the skilled person is another woman, however, I compare myself with her, find myself wanting, and experience more distress. It seems that I rarely *compare* myself with a man. It is not that I am not critical of men, but it takes place at a head level. I might note a skill that I would like to have, but not having it doesn't challenge my sense of identity. Is this because socialisation has taught me not to aspire to the skills that men have? Is it because I have learned to be jealous of women? Or is it simply that I can identify more easily with a woman, not just at a gender level, but in terms of recognising a traveller on a similar path who has progressed further along the way and collected gifts that I have missed?

I am not attempting to answer these questions, but explore the whole issue of women and men communicating in the next chapter.

In Conclusion

This exploration demonstrates the wisdom of Denis Postle (1992) in including a category of emotional competence that explicitly refers to collaborative work. On my own I achieve a reasonable degree of emotional competence (I think, but suppose that is only because there is no-one, except my journal, to say otherwise?), but in collaboration the picture is patchy indeed. Postle gives three pitfalls of the absence of this competence:

1) It does indeed lead me to submissiveness with occasional bursts of aggression, although I think I avoid manipulative behaviour. 2) Certainly my range of collaborative style is restricted: I can collaborate well with some people e.g. Sara, but am inhibited with others. As to 3) learning from painful experiences, I believe I *can* do that. I might hold resentment or anger towards others temporarily, but have always been able to work through and communicate about that. I have also experienced poorly defined boundaries in this context, and insecure self-esteem, both of which Postle lists under the absence of (6) confrontation competence. This last, insecure self-esteem, is still my greatest weakness in new situations.

In answer to the question "how do I sustain the connection with my personal presence when someone else is working with me?" one message, noted in my journal, comes through loud and clear: I must have the courage of my convictions with a colleague. For that I need both trust, and a connection with my inner self, and without those, any tension between us is likely to degenerate into an issue of control.

Establishing trust is a gradual process and can be helped by clarity on both sides about preferences, needs, and anxieties. I need to state these clearly and be prepared to negotiate. Much understanding of how a person works tends to emerge during planning sessions. These need to be followed by a thorough review soon after the event, a vital part of a partnership which tends to get missed when lives are busy and time is short

To maintain connection with my inner self, whether I am working alone or in partnership, I need to take time out from the group in order to tune in to my thoughts and feelings about how I to proceed. A co-facilitator can intrude on this "time out", especially if their preference, like Sara's, is for processing experience in discussion with others. By being explicit about these conflicting needs we have managed a successful compromise in which, incidentally, we both have the opportunity to learn a little of the other's skill.

Once again the message is to move away from the "either-or" position. It is not a question of *either* she wins and I suffer, *or* I win and she suffers. It is not that I am automatically a failure if you are a success. I am only a victim if I frame your brilliance and energy as eclipsing or controlling me. If I maintain my sense of self, my presence, and explore the and-and position, we can uncover riches and learn from each other.

Men and Women Communicating

This chapter describes my belated exploration of feminist writing. The combined influence of the goddess traditions, working with both women and men in patriarchal organizations, and being a member of the Bath Research Group prevailed on me to engage with the complexity I had so far avoided: how and why it is difficult to be a woman in a patriarchal society; what patriarchy consists of; how to distinguish between patriarchy and men; and how to talk about it constructively.

To make this exploration I weave my own personal and professional experience into the themes of the literature; comment on my developing thinking; and on the potential for women to connect with their own power, transcend power struggles between women and men, and achieve real communication.

Introduction

My reading of feminist writers moved me from a position of thinking it enormously important that women and men try to understand each other, to thinking it equally or more important that women move on to the next stage of their liberated development, that of fully engaging with what it means to be women. The earlier literature seemed to show women moving away from a focus on pleasing men, to a position of either emulating and competing with men or separating from them. Whatever the activity, it revolved around men as the focus of attention, whether to be pleased, copied, beaten or avoided. This may be a necessary part of the process of women freeing themselves, and is certainly familiar from my own experience of self and others, but it often makes understanding between women and men less likely. Shifting that focus onto being women, in all the diversity that involves, not out of spite towards men or the need to escape, but out of interest in woman-ness, may eventually result in the valuable secondary gain of better communication which springs from openness and interest rather than political motives.

A major obstacle to communication between the sexes is the uneasy relationship between the general and the political on the one hand, and the individual and personal on the other. Individual women who feel oppressed do not necessarily want to blame individual men. But individual men often feel attacked by the protests of oppressed women. Hence my struggle with reading feminist writers on honeymoon because I absorbed a negativity about men which felt at odds with, and threatening to, my new and loving relationship. It is important to remember that, in general, it is not men who are the enemy, but patriarchy.

And yet it is not even that simple. Some oppressive systems are clearly implemented or supported by individual men, whether unwarily or deliberately, for their own advantage; some are similarly implemented or supported by women; nor is it only women that such patriarchal systems oppress. A further confusion is that, for many women, individual men

are the enemy (and vice versa), which of course raises questions about how their relationship of victim and oppressor arose, to what extent individuals are the products of their culture and conditioning, and whether it is possible to escape this.

One thing I have learned in writing this chapter is that I do not have to *know*. I do not have to make a decision or take up a position. Having realized that, it became a lot easier to engage with the complexity of the issues in the feminist literature.

As I read I struggled by turn with strong identification, equally strong resistance, and uneasy ambivalence, all to the same author. I note that writers have been divided into distinct schools of feminism: liberal, radical, socialist, and postmodern, to name but a few, but on admittedly superficial acquaintance, they do not seem to fall readily under those headings. Or is that just my perception? On examination of that statement I find that my interest and agreement in what they say is at war with a desire to be comfortably aligned according to category. So it may be this reader rather than the writers who does not fit the categories.

I see at least three reasons for this confusion. The first is as described, that I identify with some, and reject other ideas within each school. The second is that my own feminist consciousness is changing, so that I am still lingering over throwing liberal feminist views out of the window, as I welcome more radical ideas at the door; and before long I'm leaving those to catch up with the postmodern position.

The third reason is that I am attracted to opposing arguments, not only believing that either or both could be right, depending on how events turn out, but also experiencing deep ambivalence about options described. This is strongest, for instance, in the radical feminist rejection of biology as a necessary part of being a woman. I will outline this briefly as it illustrates the kind of dilemma I find myself in.

Shulamith Firestone's proposes (Firestone 1970) to use technology to free women from their biological function in reproduction. I understand her argument that this has been, and is, the root of women's oppression, but feel deeply threatened at the prospect of it being removed. I don't believe that is because I have a need to be oppressed (but hesitate to brush that too lightly aside, having noticed the tenacity of my own patterns and my guilt, once the "oppression" is removed), but because, unlike Firestone, I do not see that biology as just a source of oppression, but rather as a rich source of powerful energy and creativity. I feel strongly enough about that to reject Firestone's proposals of reproductive technology as a way forward.

My ambivalence doesn't end there, however. Firestone's ideas reminded me of the society described by Marge Piercy (1987) in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, a long time favourite

book, which I discovered is indeed based on her ideas. Although I shared the heroine Connie's resistance to the breeding and parenting arrangements of that future, the characters won me over to Piercy's vision, and I could see in them a viable and attractive realisation of Firestone's ideas. But it seems to me that the success of such a vision depends upon a radical change of attitude to relationships and attachment, and/or a degree of emotional competence found only rarely within small and rarefied communities, after intense work, and for fairly short periods of time. As the development of reproductive technology currently lies in the hands of scientists who are mostly men, it seems more likely that it would be used to control women further, than to realise any Utopian vision.

Having taken a step back from the complexity and my ambivalence, I noticed that it would make more sense to approach this area in terms of the themes that first attracted my attention because they resonated with my own experiences of working and interacting with both women and men. I explore these themes under the following headings: Silent and Invisible women; Women Supporting Men; Intimacy and Independence; My Developing Awareness, and finally, Women Finding their Power.

Invisible and Silent Women

The issues of invisibility and silence in women are closely intertwined and were the first themes (Reinharz 1991, see below; Spender 1990; Belenky et al. 1986 p.18-19; Gilligan 1993) that resonated strongly with my own experience. It was by being silenced that I became invisible, right from an early age when I ran to hide from a loud male relative who teased my mouse-like quietness by shouting at me not to make so much *noise*. I was silenced by being mocked when I attempted to express what I now understand was a female way of knowing. I was silenced by the impossible gulf between my view of the world and my father's; frozen into paralysed silence by the dark corridors of school, the rigidity and the verbal violence of some of the (female) teachers; silenced later by the futility of attempting to communicate with partners, sometimes believing I was going mad because our perceptions of reality were so different. Never in any of these cases did it occur to me that I could be right instead of them, or that we could both be right.

Elsewhere I have written about the difficulty of becoming visible without examining how I became invisible, or considering that invisibility was anything but a not very praiseworthy but quite desirable state that I had achieved because I lacked courage and wanted to hide from the world. It was only because invisibility became too *comfortable* as I became aware of my growing potential that I felt the need to move out of it. Since gaining a feminist perspective on the invisibility of women I have become aware that my own perspective on it was just that, a perspective. It then occurred to me, not only that my invisibility might not be entirely my "fault" or responsibility, but also that I was not alone — this state might be shared willingly or

unwillingly by women everywhere. I also noticed that my first awakening to my potential was actually a process of becoming visible to myself for the very first time. Nor was it a question of just stepping out of invisibility into visibility.

In spite of the evidence all around me, I believed that I held sole responsibility for my invisibility, considered it an attribute of mine, a fault even, and held on to this view long after the time when I heard myself exclaiming in exasperation "am I invisible or something?" or *accusing others of my feeling of invisibility*. This is true victim mode and it also contains a very obvious contradiction which is often highlighted in courses on assertive communication. It is not assertive to say "You make me feel invisible". The correct form is: "When you do x, I feel invisible". The rule is to express feelings about the behaviour, and to avoid attacking the person. Often it seems that the attack is only thinly veiled by the form of the words. However, there is a qualitative difference between "When you beat time to the music, I get angry" and "When you refuse to see me, I feel invisible". It is as if I am rendered invisible by your refusal and this ignoring of me represents a violation of a basic human right to respect.

Spender (1990 p. 57) suggests that *"males may not even suspect that their meanings of women, and women's experience, are only the partial meanings of the spectator."* I believe that this is frequently the case, and at the root of many communication difficulties that can begin to be resolved once this is recognized. That recognition, however, that meanings may be different between women and men may be difficult to achieve among people who only accept one dimension of reality. It may be equally true that women's meanings of men and men's experience are also only partial, guessed at, and not inquired about, but women seem more likely to accept a number of different realities.

Males who have accepted the definitive nature of the dominant reality are unlikely to be familiar with any other focus. Whereas multidimensional reality may be a daily lived experience for many women, it may be nothing less than an absurd, and abstract, concept to many men.

Spender 1990 p.96

A recent conversation with two male friends re-inforced the difficulty of communicating from a belief in multiple realities with people (in this case men) who hold one view of reality. I was wanting to explore the use of the word "lady" by these friends, and started in the spirit of inquiry to explore what men intend when they use this word. I explained that, although aware of the good intentions of men using it, I did not receive it well and suggested that they might like to know what it meant to me. They expressed interest, but when I began to tell them they contradicted me, and insisted not only that it must mean what they intended it to mean, but also that it was unwise to look beyond the formality of the words.

Yet it is exactly the formality, the perception of "lady" as a role, that bothers me. My journal of January 1992 explores what the word means to me: ladies are ladylike, make conversation, laugh politely and never coarsely, and withdraw into drawing rooms so that the men can let their hair down over the port and say all the things that would be offensive to ladies' shell-like ears. They are neat and tidy and well-groomed, have small feet, elegant ankles, and small waists. Women, on the other hand, have bodies that smell, hairy legs, and knobby knees, and they laugh and cry and get angry, and enjoy port as much as men do.

A Lady is someone you open a door for. A Woman is someone you have a discussion with.

January 1992

My friends' refusal or inability to hear me rendered me invisible as a woman: to them I feel I will always be a lady, and our interactions will remain at a correspondingly superficial level.

What that lived experience does for me is complex to describe. Being called a lady by my friends does not confine me to the role of lady as I see it; nor does it confine me to their view of a lady. But it does give me a personal struggle not to assume the facade, to put on the mask that is offered. If I accept the part, I modify my behaviour in little ways and feel less robust every time I do that. I feel strained and constrained, and have to struggle not to shrink myself intellectually and emotionally. If I decline the part offered, I can no longer do things naturally without being seen to make a point. As I reach for the wine bottle, I am aware that "he" may be critical, or feel criticised or both. My choices are not limited, but they do become loaded.

What is more it takes my energy and attention away from what I want to do. If in mid discussion I am handed a compliment, and pause to accept it, the impetus is lost, through, not only the interruption, but the demonstration of relative disinterest in what I have been saying. If I ignore it, or protest, I am written off as ungracious.

The fact of these different realities complicates the issue of responsibility for and power in communication. It may not occur to the men referred to by Spender that a woman who says nothing audible has anything to say.

Shulamit Reinharz, describing her search for "missing" women sociologists (Reinharz 1991) addresses the issue of invisibility and inaudibility by placing the responsibility with men:

I needed a word to describe the problem of women's being overlooked, but I did not want to use an adjective such as "overlooked". Such a word would "blame the victim". For this reason I was dissatisfied with the phrase "invisible woman". Women are not invisible. They do not have that attribute. Rather, the problem is that some people cannot see women. I invented a word that located the problem in the perpetrator rather than the victim. ...

Gynopia is the inability to perceive the very existence of women as fully human actors. Gynopia is the factor that produces the invisibility in women. A mild form of gynopia leads to being able to perceive women as simply "there" but not having detail or significance. I also find a lot of evidence of gynauria, a word I invented to mean "the inability to hear women".

Reinharz 1991 p.14

There are two issues here. On the one hand there are women who are present and audible and who experience gynopia and gynauria. On the other there are women who are invisible because they do hide and do not make themselves heard for whatever reason. The shades of variation in between are infinite as women struggle to take responsibility for their meanings in a hostile or unreceptive environment. For some, who protect their unawareness carefully, the attempt is literally inconceivable, for others the attempt would be too dangerous to contemplate. I will return to the issue of responsibility for communication in the section "Conversation".

The Sound of Silence Breaking

Sheila Rowbotham speaks of a "paralysis of consciousness" which makes it hard for women, as an oppressed group, to begin to change their position. This finds echoes in the study of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, (1986) who set out to explore the alienation they encountered among women in formal educational settings which appeared not to be meeting their needs. They document silence and paralysis as one position of women they talked to. Other perspectives on learning and knowing of these women included accepting received knowledge, finding an inner voice, and integrated knowing. I find in these categories of how people know, a reflection of my own experience where those perspectives seem to follow each other as progressive stages of awareness. Women in their category of *Silence* were "dwarfed by authority", "passive, reactive, and dependent", and "looking for a safe place to hide". Rowbotham describes a parallel condition:

The oppressed without hope are mysteriously quiet. When the conception of change is beyond the limits of the possible, there are no words to articulate discontent so it is sometimes held not to exist. This mistaken belief arises because we can only grasp silence in the moment in which it is breaking. The sound of silence breaking makes us understand what we could not hear before. But the fact that we could not hear does not prove that no pain existed. The revolutionary must listen very carefully to the language of silence. This is particularly important for women because we come from such a long silence.

Rowbotham 1973

On reading this I realize that in many situations as a facilitator I am listening to the sound of silence breaking, and discovering the "*roar which lies on the other side of silence*" (Belenky et

al 1986). This applies less to working with groups of women in commerce than to groups specifically targeted at women returning to work after long-term unemployment. (In the commercial setting it is usually the men who break their silence and start to articulate their feelings.) However, it is interesting to reflect that some women who may be confident and articulate at work may revert to comparative silence at home. Sophie, a career-minded and successful executive secretary in a prestigious company described herself as a "split personality":

... at work, and when I'm out socially with friends, I'm one person and then when I'm at home I'm somebody else.

Taped conversation 2nd April 1991

She refers to changes in personal relationships, and sees her growing confidence at work as growing up:

I feel I've sort of been in a deep sleep for a long time and I'm suddenly just starting to wake up.

... I was sort of brought up to be a good little girl and be quiet and do what Mummy says and you know, don't be outspoken and all the rest of it, and I know it sounds silly, but when you're a secretary as well, that's another in that sort of mould type job. ... When suddenly you turn round and say something, they nearly fall over.

Taped conversation 2nd April 1991

Several images stay with me of women who broke their silence in the Women Returners group. Many of the women admit to having difficulty talking in the group, and I recall one who seemed to look quickly behind her when she spoke, as if the sound might be coming from someone else. L, who came across to the group and to me as a strong, witty woman, could not imagine herself being employable because she was "no good at nuffin", needed to park near the entrance to the car park in order to avoid the self-conscious ordeal of having to walk across it, and was frightened to go out without her children because she felt "unreal" on her own. J who had very recently "come out", in the sense of returning to the world after conquering agrophobia and a fear of meeting people, had a terror that her "problem" made her unacceptable: when she became nervous, which she was most of the time, her head nodded in a way she could not control. Her excitement at her new self won through, however, and having broken her silence, she talked eloquently of her experience, supported others in their struggle, and succeeded at interview in getting a good job, her first in about fifteen years.

S was in the same group, but at the other end of the economic spectrum, well dressed, groomed and manicured, and talking of a very affluent lifestyle. She broke silence in a different kind of way. She talked too much from the first, stealing air time from others, and

was unable to maintain eye contact. Her talk concealed an underlying silence: she had not been communicating with herself, or allowing herself to acknowledge her own deep distress; she preferred to focus on externals, particularly being judgmental of others. She was cynical at first about the usefulness of the course in general, and was critical and scornful of both the course and the people on it. At the same time she could not help being curious about therapies of all sorts, started contradicting her own strongly voiced opinions, and became more reflective. Finally she became more open, shared her emotions, and demonstrated that silence can be eloquent, and chatter a form of silence.

One courageous Arab woman attended an Access course for people returning to higher education. When I first met her she spoke inaudibly with averted eyes, her head swathed in a heavy silk veil. Her struggle was a hard one, involving antagonising her mother-in-law and the risk of losing her husband as the price of breaking her silence. When she left the course, her head was held high and free of the veil, she looked people in the eye and spoke gently but clearly. She secured a University place to study Law.

Dale Spender (1990) also writes of the silence of women, as members of a muted group, who have their meanings dismissed and excluded by the dominant group. Even when women have expressed themselves in writing, researchers have found them difficult to trace because another sexist practice, that of the dominance of male surnames, makes them "disappear". As Spender says, this is *"one more device for making women invisible."*

Such conventions are often defended as "just a formality", a form of politeness, like "ladies". Those little words, "just", and "only". They are the nuts and bolts of oppression holding together the structures of our society. Like the sexist remark which is *only* a joke. It is precisely the point that it *can* be a joke, which is oppressive. Isn't it? But to object is to be criticised for being heavy, picky, lacking a sense of humour. How much easier it is to be silent. I wonder how many women who find their voice fall silent again out of sheer exhaustion.

Women Supporting Men

Spender also sees that men as the dominant group have a great deal vested in keeping women's meanings muted. She cites the work of Jean Baker Miller, describing the tunnel vision that men have developed to allow them to control reality and that allows them to shut out a large part of human experience:

in order to sustain their position they have been obliged to deny that which they cannot explain.

Spender 1990 p.99

Miller describes women in a kind of scapegoat role to patriarchy, carrying the messy part of the experience of being human that doesn't fit men's neat scheme of things, and posing the threat of "doing a Pandora" on the carefully sealed box that patriarchy has left in their charge.

Miller's thesis is that males have allocated to women that which is outside their control and which they fear, because it is outside their control. Within that imposed patriarchal framework it is the task of women to produce order out of the chaos of human experience, and in the process women become more closely identified with chaos in the minds of the dominant group. Woman has become synonymous with chaos, but by controlling women, the illusion of overall male control remains intact.

Within Miller's conceptualization of the problem, it is easy to discern why it has been a male priority to keep women quiet. The expression of women threatens to unlock the doors and unleash all those mysterious, illogical and disordered aspects of human experience which challenge the appearance and the actuality of male supremacy and control. In this context, the need for women's silence in patriarchal order should not be underestimated. It is a prerequisite for male supremacy and without it the whole order could crumble.

Spender 1990 p.101

Miller's analysis links with the strong tendency of men to make a distinct split between work and home, public and private life. Phillipson and Riley notice that when women appear in the work place this distinction becomes blurred:

With the increasing alienation from the world of work ... men have sought refuge and a place of comfort and emotional succour. The place is home. The source is women. Men can operate as beings who are rational, objective, fearless, because emotions are kept for and belong at home. But as women begin to enter the world that once belonged primarily to men, the world of middle and senior management, they blur the boundaries between the private and the public. The inside has appeared on the outside.

... Women provide a place, ... where men can be vulnerable.

Phillipson and Riley 1990 p.91

One role of women is to allow men to be vulnerable, and to keep that vulnerability secret; another parallel role is to reassure them and build their egos before they return to the world. Neither of these roles is compatible with tackling the conflicts that a male and female manager may have in the course of working together. Adrienne Rich sees this role as part and parcel of women's oppression:

For fundamental to women's oppression is the assumption that we as a group belong to the "private" sphere of the home, the hearth, the family, the sexual, the emotional, out of which men emerge as adults to act in the "public" arena of power, the "real" world, and to which they return

for mothering, for access to female forms of intimacy, affection, and solace unavailable in the realm of male struggle and competition.

Rich 1979 p.215

Virginia Woolf, writing fifty years earlier, also describes this role:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.

... That serves to explain in part the necessity that women are to men. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism; ... For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished.

Woolf 1929 in Humm 1992

And again in the eighties, Gilligan:

Woman's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies.

Gilligan in Harding 1987

Looking back to my own experience of being in that caretaking role, I see that women can also "buy in" to the larger than life image in the mirror, the illusion they have helped to create. I remember repeated discussions with women friends where we searched for giants among our collective husbands and failed to find them, being continually disappointed in our expectations. (*"Why do we have to be giants? Why can't we just be men?"* I hear the men cry.) Later we came to admit, rather like children confessing to no longer believing in Father Christmas, and careful not to tread on each other's lingering illusions, that there were no giants. Later again we recognised that we women had our own strength: the power lay within ourselves.

As women have moved more and more into the world of work, they have tended to carry the caretaking role with them as "wives of the organization" (Huff 1990), not just out of habit but in response to the increasing demands of organizations for relational skills. The organization "wife" is characterised by her awareness of people's personal needs and problems and concern to make it better; her attention to detail; her success as a "cheer leader" and failure as a task master; her tendency not to claim credit for her competence; her habit of indirect persuasion that further loses her credit; and her skill at negotiation and mediation.

Sophie, the senior secretary referred to earlier, saw herself carrying this role in her department:

my manager said he regards me as the eyes and ears of the department. If there's any sort of bad feeling or things like that I will know about it much quicker than he will. ... I'll say to him, P did you know ...[for example, it is A's birthday; B has had x setback. You could mention it], just when you're passing, and they think it's wonderful. I mean they don't know that I tell him. It doesn't matter that they don't know.

Taped conversation 2nd April 1991

As a secretary she can take the role without any sense of conflict, and sees it as part of the job. She finds satisfaction in the caring and doesn't mind the invisibility of the role. Of one incident she says: *"I thought, if that's the only good thing I do today, I'm satisfied"*. But another part of her admits to being *"bored stiff"* and *"ticking over"* in the job she is doing. She is applying for promotion to a top secretarial post and is also studying towards an MBA.

I see in Sophie many of the characteristics of the "organization wife", behaviour that may be appropriate to a secretarial role. I wonder, however, not only whether it is appropriate that she is allowing her manager to shine at her expense, but also whether this may handicap Sophie's progress if she wishes to move out of that role. Huff comments:

This is not the way she will get her name in lights. ...

Organization wives not only exhaust themselves, they behave in ways that help keep them at lower levels of their professions. They deny themselves, and are denied by the organization, the experiences that will allow them to rise to the top.

Huff 1990

Huff identifies five forces which suck women into the role of organization wife. The first two are:

- 1. the desire to live in ways that connect us to others;*
- 2. a radar that continually alerts us to the needs of others and to the tasks that still remain to be done;*

Huff 1990

I see a combination of these in Sophie the secretary, in nine out of ten women on the Returning to Work course, and in myself as I struggle to complete the writing of this thesis. Even now, when circumstances and family are combining to support my effort and free my time, I experience a kind of porous concentration (no doubt similar to the porous boundaries described in Chapter 13 in the context of working with others). Not only am I more vulnerable to potential interruptions than men I have observed in similar situations, but I have a habit of breaking off which leads me to interrupt myself if no-one else does it for me. Tillie

Olsen (Olsen 1980) refers to the pattern of discontinuity, the distractibility which has become the habit of a lifetime, and which I see in many women's lives both at a micro and a macro level. Huff quotes Lillian Rubin to illustrate this important difference between men and women:

His relatively rigid boundaries enable him to shut out the world, to turn himself off; her more permeable ones permit no such easy escape. ... Her more expansive inner experience leaves her forever vulnerable to competing relational claims, forever trying to mediate, sort, mend, soothe.

Rubin 1983 p.167 in Huff 1990

On the Returning to Work course this syndrome leads every time to an early discussion of the guilt associated with becoming more assertive. Nearly all the women from a kaleidoscope of different cultures describe themselves as not only highly susceptible to the criticism of selfishness from their families, but also *feel* selfish themselves. And selfishness is almost always defined as a fault and a vice. Only with difficulty and time is it possible for these women to reframe it as a strength, a need, a neutral trait, or an asset in a wife and mother from which all parties involved can eventually benefit, learn, and grow. And still the guilt returns to hamper their attempts to grasp opportunities and freedom. Most of these women describe as selfish their requests for chores to be shared, to be allowed in the bathroom early enough to get to college on time, to be absent on certain days, and to have time and space to study. Yet they do not describe as selfish their husbands' and children's expectation to be serviced and to be free to go out when they wish. If I put before them the possibility of so doing, it causes their eyes to open wide, their mouths to drop open, and a thoughtful silence to descend on the room.

Huff suggests that both men and women continue to be uncomfortable with the presence of women at work, and that they collude to ease that discomfort by assuming familiar social roles. So that women will tend to recreate the home situation described above in the work place.

Repeatedly I see female managers caught in the trap of their own compassion, unable to take a tough line because they see the problem this will cause others, colluding with men to conceal their shortcomings, and being conciliatory because they cannot endure the bad feeling which will result if they are not. L, an administrative manager, described her dissatisfaction with routine tasks that were not part of her job description. These prevented her from making progress with special projects for which she had been appointed. When asked about getting an assistant to do these tasks, she said that if her manager had to make a request for an assistant it would reveal his incompetence. The tasks were part of his job, but he could not or would not understand the technology required to perform them. L found

herself unable to assert herself because her manager would be threatened and she expected reprisals from him for exposing him.

Those that do assert themselves successfully are uncomfortable afterwards. S, the head of a counselling service in her organization said *"I stood up to him being off-hand and aggressive, all 5ft 4in of me, and I got an answer out of him in the end, but I felt awful afterwards and avoided him for days."* Men in the same group found it hard to understand why S felt bad, which I have found a common response from confident males. Male managers do not often show the same need to be liked, talk of making themselves unpopular as inevitable or business as usual, and rarely experience a temptation to take on the problems of others. These observations are echoed again by Gilligan:

Women's deference is rooted ... in the substance of their moral concern. Sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgement other points of view. Women's moral weakness, manifest in an apparent diffusion and confusion of judgement, is thus inseparable from women's moral strength, an overriding concern with relationships and responsibilities. The reluctance to judge can itself be indicative of the same care and concern for others ...

Gilligan in Harding 1987

Intimacy or Independence?

In this section I explore issues of relationship and control under the headings of Development and Conditioning, Language and Conversation.

Development and Conditioning

The differences Gilligan found in ethical code among men and women are congruent with the theories of Nancy Chodorow whose starting point is that identity development is different in men and women. In her view men develop a "positional identity" defined by their power within the social structure, and involving denial of deep feelings of attachment to the mother. Women develop a "relational identity" defined by relationship to others which is continuous with early childhood attachments.

A boy, in his attempt to gain an elusive masculine identification, often comes to define this masculinity largely in negative terms, as that which is not feminine or involved with women. ... He also tries to deny the deep personal identification with her [his mother] ... by repressing whatever he takes to be feminine inside himself, and, importantly, by denigrating and devaluing whatever he considers to be feminine in the outside world. ...

The development of a girl's gender identity contrasts with that of a boy. ... Identification with her mother is not positional — the narrow learning of particular role behaviors — but rather a personal identification with her mother's general traits of character and values. ... the gradual learning of a way of being familiar in everyday life, and exemplified by the person with whom she has been most involved.

Chodorow 1974 in Jackson 1993

The implications of this are that women are encouraged to relate to others and build their values on relationship, while men's experience at this critical developmental stage teaches them to deny relationship and value division, separation, control and independence. I notice an extreme of this in many men who, as small boys, were physically removed from the feminine influences of home to the rigours of a traditional public school, and who describe themselves as handicapped by an ability even to differentiate and recognize feelings, let alone express them.

Girls emerge from this period [of early mother-child relationship] with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not.

... The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate.

Chodorow 1978 in Humm 1992

The very clear distinctions drawn here are blurred for me by remembering that it seemed every bit as much of a problem to be a "Mummy's girl" as it was to be a "Mummy's boy", and it wasn't only boys who had problems being called "sissy".

I remember feeling a similar need to conceal the intimacy and childish rituals of home, to "denigrate and devalue" them, in order to gain acceptance by peers. This suggests that the distinction is not so clear cut as Chodorow describes it. Also I wonder whether men totally repress or destroy this connection, or is it rather that they conceal it, protect it even, and keep it in a private place. Whatever the variety of strategies may be, there is evidence that the feminine connection is not considered useful or desirable in the public world, and according to Chodorow, men depend for their very identity on keeping it under strict controls. It also indicates that men's need to control women has its origin in fear, which I explore further in the section "Women finding their Power".

If women build their identity in terms of relationship and connection, does this in itself feed women's perception of being deliberately oppressed? Is it possible that women project onto men an awareness similar to their own that their behaviour will have a positive or negative effect upon others? Certainly I have listened to women doing this and concluding that

oppressive behaviour is deliberate when it might be unaware. For it also possible that some men (and indeed some women) act without attention to, or awareness of, anything other than the direct task outcome of their action. I do not deny that there are men who deliberately and/or awarely oppress women, but I do believe that many who are perceived by women to oppress, do not have that motivation. However, isn't their lack of awareness itself a microcosm of the macro system that oppresses women?

If I take Jung's concept of animus and anima, the notion that each gender has a seed of the other within it, and put it alongside a theory of gender identification such as Chodorow's, then it is clear to see the conflict that can arise within an individual, as well as the potential for misunderstanding between the sexes. The following journal entry records an ongoing personal conflict directly related to this dilemma.

The conflict is between my needs for intimacy in a fulfilling and committed relationship, and my needs for independence and personal space.

When I access my internal masculine strength, it tends to cause problems because I feel strong and independent, and want to use the freedom to do what I want without reference to others.

... immense relief and exhilaration to throw off the constraints of always putting self second to the needs and demands of a dependent and/or authoritative other. This may be interpreted as selfishness, or experienced as rejection by the other.

In the context of a committed relationship this independence runs into conflict. On the one hand the relationship couldn't have a basis of equality without it. On the other, the conditions for establishing and maintaining independence and intimacy sometimes appear to be mutually exclusive or hostile.

Journal March 1993

It is important to recognize that the conflict contains within it the potential for understanding, integration and synergy — the dialectic referred to by Gilligan.

Gilligan's research suggests that women and men use the same language to mean different things. They may therefore not appreciate the disparity between their moral codes, which may be the source of misunderstanding. Be that as it may, Gilligan sees the possibility of a dialectic of human development in which these two potentially conflicting moralities are seen as complementary to each other, affect each other beneficially, and become integrated.

Because these languages share an overlapping moral vocabulary, they contain a propensity for systematic mistranslation, creating misunderstandings which impede communication and limit potential for cooperation and care in relationships. At the same time, however, these languages articulate with one another in critical ways. Just as the language of responsibilities provides a

weblike imagery of relationships to replace a hierarchical ordering ..., so the language of rights underlines the importance of including in the network of care not only the other but also the self.

Gilligan 1982

Language

Having sketched in some of the conditions of relationship that form the backdrop to communication, I turn now to examine some aspects of the language that is used.

Spender's main thesis is that the bias towards males in our society is structured into the language, and that language is therefore a very powerful and largely unnoticed form of control of women by men. Evidence of this is complex and many layered. Fundamental is that the masculine is the unmarked gender, the assumption being that something is male unless marked otherwise, as in *lady doctor*.

The semantic rule which has been responsible for the manifestation of sexism in the language can be simply stated: there are two categories, male and minus male. To be linked with male is to be linked to a range of meanings which are positive and good: to be linked to minus male is to be linked to the absence of those qualities,

Spender 1990 p.23

This results in women occupying what Julia Stanley (Stanley 1977 in Spender 1990) has termed "negative semantic space", or semantic invisibility. The use of *he* and *man* to represent all humans is a particularly powerful and pervasive example.

Another example is what Spender terms the "pejoration" of words describing females, such as *spinster* which has acquired negative connotations even in dictionary definitions, unlike its masculine counterpart *bachelor*. (see Chapter 15) Spender cites the work of Muriel Schulz (1975a) who refers to the "*systematic, semantic derogation of women*", making a comprehensive claim for a semantic "rule" in male dominated society, that all words associated with females acquire negative values. Once this semantic pejoration has taken place in a word by its association, the logic of its meaning is no longer semantic but sexual.

One result of the domination and control of language by men is that women do not find the language suited to expressing their meanings, and thus become further muted as a group. Spender cites Ardener as identifying an extra stage that women must engage in, a stage of *transformation* between their own generation of meaning at a deep level, and the expression of that meaning in a male register at the surface level. This robs women of spontaneity and puts them at a disadvantage:

Not to be able to come to one's own truth, or not to use it in one's writing, even when telling the truth having to "tell it slant", robs one of drive, of conviction, limits potential stature ...

Tillie Olsen quoted by Rich 1979 in Spender 1990 p.82

My experience of being in confrontation with a man is that, not only am I trying to transform my own meaning to convey it to him, but *at the same time* I am trying to make sense of what he is saying in my terms. No wonder that so often I have not succeeded and have ended up with the impression that one of us is speaking Chinese. This clarifies to me why it is so helpful to separate these communications with the "Structured Conversation" method that I have used in such situations, often between women and men. This method allows communication in only one direction at a time, and the first Listener must hear and reflect back to the satisfaction of the first Speaker, before these roles may be reversed.

Conversation

Lakoff's research on women's use of language in conversation identifies the tag question, amongst other features of women's talk denoting uncertainty, hesitation and lack of authority. This led her to the conclusion that women's use of language was deficient compared to men's use of it. Subsequent studies challenge this, some on the grounds that it is by no means certain that women use more tag questions than men. Henley and Kramarae object to female deficit theory because it defines women as deviant, putting the onus on women to change to come into line with men. Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary cite the work of Holmes who examines the context in which tag questions are used, claiming that a tag can have a number of different functions and does not automatically signal tentativeness, but can, for instance, be facilitative, having no informational, but an important interactional, function of "*drawing other participants into an exchange*".

What was initially seen by Lakoff as powerless and weak in female language, then, is now redefined as a valuable interactional skill.

Jackson 1993 p.405

Tentativeness does not of course have to be a sign of weakness. It may signal sensitivity to another point of view, or it can be a way of inquiring (Fisher & Torbert 1995). This is not to say that women's language and tags in particular never betray uncertainty in the sense of unassertive apology. A large part of the learning of assertive communication consists of eliminating the inappropriate use, by both men and women, of tags of the kind: "I'll be assertive *if it's OK with you*", which convey a need for approval or depend on the convenience of others.

The facilitative tag is one tool that women use in their role of keeping conversations flowing, or as Fishman puts it, doing the interactional *shitwork* (Spender 1990). Spender cites the work of Aries who finds women in single sex groups sharing air time by taking it in turn to speak, whereas single sex groups of men compete to hold the floor. Thus it is no surprise that women in mixed sex groups experience interruption by men who may indeed be looking for an opportunity to dominate, or who may genuinely interpret a facilitative tag as a request for information or entertainment, and an invitation to hold forth. Both groups however are guilty of arrogance and lack of respect for what women might have to say if they allow their contribution to become out of balance with that of their listeners. The evidence is that men frequently do this. Spender concludes:

Interruption is a mechanism by which (a) males can prevent females from talking, and (b) they can gain the floor for themselves; ... a mechanism by which they engineer female silence.

Spender 1990 p.44

Another area where it is uncertain whether men are motivated by a need to dominate or a need to be useful is what I call the fix-it response, which I have found a common ground of misunderstanding particularly between male managers and their female staff. A woman describes her feelings about a problem with the need to be listened to, either simply to let off steam, or to explore her own solutions to the problem, using the other person as a sounding board. What she may want is empathy, but what she frequently gets is a task-oriented solution. Tannen notes the same source of misunderstanding:

Eve wanted the gift of understanding, but Mark gave her the gift of advice. He was taking the role of problem solver, whereas she simply wanted confirmation for her feelings.

Tannen 1990 p.50

A male manager in a team I was working with was confronted with this habit. A female supervisor who reported to him, and who had a difficult staff member in one of her groups, liked to run through ideas with him before actioning them to keep him informed in case of possible repercussions. Repeatedly he would leap in and suggest tackling problems for her, which in her eyes implied that he doubted her competence. When confronted on this issue, he revealed that he thought her approaches to him were requests for help, and had been anxious to be useful. He admitted to feeling a failure if he could not fix problems for people. Tannen found *bonding through troubles* commoner among women which may account for some of the misunderstanding:

... women's inclination to indulge in troubles talk is confusing to men, who mistake the ritual lament as a request for advice.

Tannen 1990 p.102

I would not call this kind of communication "*ritual lament*", which has the negative ring of whingeing or "moaning minnies"; nor would I put it into Tannen's category of *gossip*, however useful a purpose these might serve. Rather I think it shows women engaging in a more structured activity than either of these which meets their need for a process of informal support, and which is *task-related*, but not *task-oriented*. To be successful in communicating with task-oriented people, women (or men) seeking support in this way need to be aware of their purpose, aware that this may not be shared or understood, and prepared to frame their communication accordingly (Fisher & Torbert 1995) see below.

Tannen uses Bateson's notion of *metacommunication* to understand the full meaning of communications. Bateson distinguishes the *content* or message, from *how* it is sent or the *frame* which contains the unspoken metamessage. Tannen sees the fix-it response as responding to the content or message level of the speaker and neglecting the frame or metamessage, which in Eve's case is a bid for understanding. She says that she has a problem, and *means* that she hurts and wants comfort. Her desired response from Mark is "I understand; you're not alone", instead of which he responds to the problem and offers a solution.

Women are frustrated when they not only don't get this reinforcement but, quite the opposite, feel distanced by the advice, which seems to send the metamessage "We're not the same. You have the problems; I have the solutions."

Tannen 1990 p.53

This is one reason why advice giving is ruled out in the counselling situation, to avoid the client feeling inferior in the face of the counsellor's expertise, to encourage the client to take responsibility for problem-solving, and to discourage dependency. Equally relevant to the counselling context is the other metamessage that Mark might be sending which is "We're not the same. You're feely, and I don't do feelings, I only deal in facts."

Embarrassment about emotions combined with a similar fix-it mentality produced a habit of misunderstanding in G which came across as a mistrust of women:

G was ... a traditional manager with an exclusively technical background. My first impression was of someone who might be ... unreceptive, even cynical but with a sense of humour and something warm about him. He was one of the first to be serious and open about the fears and problems he experienced. He continued to be courageous and open ... and gained the slightly surprised respect of everyone in the process.

... discussion ... about taking criticism ... difficulty of managing not to cry in response to criticism; ... G revealed a point of view which incensed nearly everyone: he experienced anyone who cried in such circumstances as manipulative. Indignation, particularly from the women, also

reasoned argument, ... G seemed unable to imagine that such behaviour could be other than manipulative. ...

...maybe seeing tears as manipulative is a way out of having to respond to them, he knows not how. ...

... another dimension to G's discomfort, ... the need, as a manager, to produce a fix. Someone comes with a problem who needs a sounding board, not a fixer. G understands management as fixing, not listening. He can produce technical fixes, ... But not emotional fixes. So it is easier to believe that the emotional person is being manipulative, then he can feel justified, not only in not responding sympathetically, but also in taking no action whatsoever.

Journal 17th April 1992

I wonder how G would respond to the kind of framing undertaken by E, a consultant, (see Chapter 12, end) who took responsibility for framing her tears and stated "*I can do a bit of re-negotiating on what crying means*". Women and men are likely to find such communication difficult, partly from embarrassment, partly because such explicit framing is unnecessary among people who share the same expectations of interactions. The frame is probably there but it is implicit and therefore not noticeable to "outsiders".

A common complaint noted by Spender which may also involve framing is that in mixed groups men "steal" women's ideas, that is, a woman expresses an idea, it is ignored, and minutes later when a man makes the same suggestion, it is noticed and treated seriously. It is not clear whether men are doing this intentionally or not, and there are a number of possible reasons for it happening, as well as the possibility that men suffer from *gynopia* and *gynauria*. My personal experience of this phenomena has been that men have indeed stolen my ideas and their success in getting them heard has been the result of presenting or framing them better than I had. Fisher & Torbert's model suggests that all communication can be categorised as:

- Framing
- Advocating
- Illustrating
- Inquiring

and that, to be effective, communications should include an interweaving of all four modes. Whether or not this model is as comprehensive as it seems to claim, it is certainly effective in making clear and explicit communications. An idea lacking a frame and advocacy is more likely to get overlooked in general discussion than one presented with those attributes. I was tempted to think that men might be better at Framing and Advocating (skills congruent with the habit of controlling boundaries and taking the lead), and women might be better at

Illustrating and Inquiring (skills congruent with making connections, caring for, and deferring to others). This theory was found not to hold water when I floated it in the Bath Research Group, as there seemed to be no gender bias in the possession of these skills. On reflection it may simply be that I see Framing and Advocating as weak areas in myself.

My Developing Awareness

I notice a considerable change in my view of relationships between men and women since immersing myself in the work of feminist writers. For instance, when I first encountered Shulamit Reinharz reading *through the lens of "feminist distrust"*, I abreacted because I imagined someone on the lookout for problems and reading them in where they did not exist. On returning to her article I consider it a reasonable strategy to use a pinch of such distrust, at least in new situations where I may previously have been naively unaware of biased attitudes.

I see myself starting out in the position of liberal feminism, and notice in myself the *"tendency to valorize a gender-neutral humanism over a gender-specific feminism"* (Tong 1992 p.31). In an early tutorial, for instance, I rejected Judi's challenge about addressing gender with the comment that I was interested in *people*.

I still however have difficulty in reconciling the need for feminist distrust in daily interactions with men, with the need to establish good, open communication. This goes against not only my predisposition to think the best of people, but also against the fundamental principles of my work. I am currently working in an organization where this dilemma is a key issue, not only for me in helping managers find ways of being effective, but for those managers who do want to achieve the best they can and encounter suspicion, manipulation, hostility and political manoeuvring.

I am thrown back on the idea that the *"theory of bad conduct"* proposed by the suffragettes may still have relevance because women who confine themselves to good conduct do not succeed.

... the understandings of the suffragettes have become incorporated in contemporary feminist theory and we are richer and wiser as a result. The conviction that men will not give up power simply because they are asked — however nicely — has grown.

Spender 1990 p.xi

Bad conduct goes against my grain. I see it making the divide between men and women wider and deeper. There is a danger expressed by E, a transformational change consultant, in becoming what she calls "positional":

if you're very feminist, and you're very positional about women's role in society, ... you set up a position over here, and someone else has to take up a position over there. It's just the way the world is, you know? If you are positional, that means that anyone who isn't in agreement with you is against you. So often feminists are positional about stuff, you know, there's no room for anyone to be anything else other than in agreement with them. And I think that sets up its own cause and effect.

Taped conversation with E 19th July 1993

For bad conduct, which may be the only effective strategy in *some* situations, reverberates far and wide. It may take a volcanic eruption to shake one stronghold of male power, but the fall-out may damage other male-female relationships which were thriving and growing. For me, acquiring the habit of feminist distrust, which seems to me consistent with a strategy of bad conduct, seems a dangerous direction to take, for it may be hard to lay it aside when among trusted friends, and relationships could become contaminated. And yet again, I hear what seems like a dangerous naiveté, when E says that oppression is "*not a gender-related matter*", that exactly echoes my own naiveté at the start of the research.

A female consultant friend related to me how oddly reluctant she was to describe the success she had recently experienced with a group of men on a training programme. She was able to write about her fearful preconceptions about the group before the event, but not about her relief in discovering she was wrong, nor about her evident pleasure in working with a group of open, friendly, and sensitive people. Her diagnosis of the problem was that part of her was *resistant to leaving the comfort of having men as the enemy*. This was not a naive comment, but the admission of an experienced consultant whose work and research reflect a commitment to exploring communication between men and women.

Spender maintains that there may be no acceptable way to get a message across to men. She describes an exchange between man and woman where the woman is *impeccably* calm and assertive, but where her emotional manner is used to reject what she is saying.

Male dismissal may be in terms of their [women's] style but that is not the issue which is at stake, for there are times when the style is 'impeccably proper' but the dismissal remains.

Spender 1990 p. 85

Yet to me it is important to maintain the habit of *assuming* that communication will be possible until a situation proves otherwise. Otherwise there is a danger of prolonging war as described by Sam Keen:

a continuation of a pattern of genderal enmity and scapegoating that men have traditionally practised against women

Keen 1992 p195

Having the dilemma worries me. On the one hand I am convinced it is a real dilemma, on the other I know that I have colluded with abusive male power in the past, and fear that I will find myself doing so again. Maybe I pull back from bad conduct out of a need for approval, following the patterns of the past. Maybe the social worker in me comes sneaking to the fore.

What I have repeatedly to remind myself of is that the enemy is not men, but patriarchy. Remembering this brings me a sense of relief, but it is not an easy task to convey this distinction in discussion with men who may fear and anticipate attack. I encounter some feminists who do not appear to make this distinction, whose position is so entrenched that I find dialogue with them impossible. Their behaviour of spraying blame indiscriminately at all men poisons the potential for understanding between men and women. Their view is of a uni-dimensional reality where no such potential exists, and seem to me to be just as much victims of male dominance as those women who submit to inequalities without protest. Although accepting the need for feminist distrust in some circumstances, I maintain the right to believe in such potential based on my own experience, without being considered naive.

This is not to suggest a leap to the other extreme of absolving all men who use power against people, both men and women. Some do need to clear confrontation; others can be appreciated for not engaging in such dynamics.

The fact that I have just made a commitment to a new relationship with a man adds another dimension to the issue as this journal entry shows:

I find it ironic to be addressing the issues involved in this chapter, and reading the feminist literature while on honeymoon. I feel disjointed to be identifying so strongly with the pain and the negatives I am reading about in women's relationships with men, and noticing how strongly it contrasts with my own situation. Looking through the eyes of these women and appreciating their perception of the world that is so diametrically opposed to my current experience induces what feels like an altered state of consciousness. If I read extracts aloud to my husband, or describe what I am reading, I find it almost impossible to frame it so that it does not come across as an attack. I am torn between conveying the pain and wanting to protect our relationship. At the same time I fear that in doing so I am not so much protecting the relationship as falling into the role of woman-protecting-man-from-painful-truth. And if it is the relationship, how real is it if it can't struggle with these issues and survive?

... The more I struggle with this subject, the more I feel my own reluctance to engage with it. It feels like walking on shifting sand, and every time I find a stepping stone to build a bridge back to my understanding of the world, it blows up in my face because I have not noticed the mine of naive and unexamined assumptions stuck to its underside.

I recognize that the discomfort comes from two sources: (1) identifying with the problems experienced by other women; and (2) not identifying, either with the problems, or with suggested strategies for dealing with them. And I fear that some of the not-identifying may stem from further layers of unawareness.

... many women deny that they have gender related problems at work ...

Maybe they are reluctant to face the pain. Maybe they are avoiding the need to do anything about. ... avoiding trying to untangle the complexity of misunderstanding, and the discomfort of that intellectual, emotional, and social difficulty. If they claim difference as women they will be penalised for it. So they don't. But until women claim difference the need to accommodate it will not be recognized. But the need to accommodate it will be deemed a sign of weakness and failure in women — failure in terms of the prevailing system which is male. So they will be judged failures because they are minus-male, or not men.

... Because they are pretending to the world that their physical cycles do not exist, women can come to disregard them themselves ... They too pay as little attention to them as possible, and lose the habit of tuning in to their bodies. So that they also lose touch with how they are affected, stop allowing for it, or strongly deny that they are, and actually become unreliable as a result, thus falling into the very trap they are trying to avoid.

Journal 30th December 1994

Women finding their power

Taking the risk of reading the above entry to my husband resulted in a conversation about powerful women. He commented that the women I had been reading about seemed to be victims. By contrast, his experience of women, particularly in his early life, had been of women who were powerful, both in their personal presence and in the way they ran their lives.

This led me to consider that some men may oppress women because they are afraid of them, and that this fear may be a primitive awe of the sexual power that women represent. Looked at from this perspective threatened men might attack women because they were frightened of them, and so use their greater physical strength to conceal their fear and turn the tables on women. Chodorow's (1974) analysis of how male gender identity develops would support this idea.

This view clarifies why I tend to see the best in abusive men, and even collude with them: in the terms of Transactional Analysis, I see the frightened Child and want to protect it. This understanding may be therapeutically necessary, but it is not sufficient, either for handling the aggressive behaviour of the adult, or for protecting the victim. My collusion is in part a falling into the trap of behaving as if the Child were physically rather than psychically present. It is appropriate to send empathy to the Child, but to act to confront the adult. Similarly if I nurture my own Child (or inner Woman) I will be better able to confront assertively, rather than lashing out destructively.

A painful example of my own hurt Child gave me an insight into how violence can arise. This incident took place long before I started this research or began to learn about my feelings through co-counselling. A male friend and I were leaning on a gate talking on a peaceful evening in the countryside, when I suddenly lashed out and hit him, making his nose bleed. My fear of being mocked or rejected had led me to misinterpret a remark, and I had hastily sought to fend off my own hurt by hurting first. I broke the trust between us because I couldn't quite believe in it. My behaviour was sexist because my conditioning told me that men are not to be trusted around intimate matters. My belief could have been self-fulfilling if we had not been able to share our vulnerabilities subsequently.

The learning from this incident was probably of key importance in helping me come to terms with the MIDS syndrome described in Chapter 11. The mistake I made in hitting my friend impressed me deeply and may well have motivated me to live with my paranoia about MIDS long enough to recognize it as such; to take risks, and become vulnerable. I learned to meet the so-called enemy half way, in the knowledge that at least half of his attitude existed only in my head, and that much of the rest sprung from fear, or misconceptions similar to my own. I learned to take the risk on the chance of a shy NOMAD emerging who has spotted an oasis, for otherwise, the oasis I aim to create may turn out to be a mirage where suits must still be worn.

There is a sense in which the MIDS and I face each other as from opposing battle lines at the beginning of a course. They may bring anxiety about talking about emotions, which is reason enough to act defensively; and when they see I am a woman they may also expect attack. If, in addition they have been *sent* on a course, there is further reason for the folded arms and the challenging or sullen look. Occasionally I meet someone who genuinely has no interest (or too deep-seated a fear) in learning from a course and who goes away apparently untouched. But the vast majority want me to win them over, and I am reminded of Sam Keen's practice of listening with the third ear. In the following extract he is talking about the difficulty men have achieving or talking about sexual intimacy. I think the process applies to intimacy in any context, including engaging with the feeling dimension in a training context.

To make the transfer, I would substitute *challenging* or *aggressive* or *cynical* for the words "vulgar", or "sexual".

Listen with the third ear and you can hear a sacred intent beneath the facade of even the most vulgar [cynical] language. Emotionally speaking, men are stutterers who often use sexual [aggressive] language to express their forbidden desires for communion. What else would you expect from a gender that has been trained for generations to be warriors and workers and conditioned not to feel or express but to stand and deliver?

Keen 1992 p78

An extreme example of "emotional stutter" pops into my mind from the distant past when I was a social work student running an after-school group for the children of "families at risk" on a council estate. There was one boy with whom none of us students could make progress because he was so aggressive. Every week he would get off on the wrong foot by punching one of us in the stomach or hitting someone really hard. Then, during one review session it occurred to us that he was honouring us with a greeting rather than attacking us. Physical violence was the only form of human communication that was familiar to George, and he was using what he knew. Once we made the reframe and treated his blows as greetings, we were able to respond more appropriately, meet him where he was, and teach him other forms of greeting over time.

Making that reframe demands a degree of self-esteem that can rise above the message to see what the meta-message might be. Once we had done that with the help of our supervisor we were able to be more resourceful and find a solution, rather than feeling we were the inevitable victims of George's behaviour. It was appropriate to meet George on his own ground because, in his eyes, and in the eyes of society, we held the power, and so had a responsibility to use it well.

E, the facilitator of organizational transformation, taught me a lesson in reframing behaviour. She stands at some distance from the blame-spraying feminist, a powerful woman whose attitude is built on strong self-esteem.

My judgement, when someone calls me 'girlie', it's fine, it's really fine. It's no attack on me, I frame that through a frame called They Like Me and They Want To Be My Friend. It's not an insult to my being, ... my intelligence, in fact I have a very big bucket called Building Rapport and Relationships. ... what it constitutes is allowing people to ... find their own path with me, so some of them will call me "girlie", and whack me on the bum, and some of them won't, and it's OK with me either way. Because it's up to me whether I take that as offensive or not.

Taped conversation 19th July 1993

As we students did with George, she meets men where they are, and tunes in to the meta-message. A key perception and skill is required here at the level of both the message *and* the meta-message. That is: to hold that rapport-building reframe *alongside* the awareness that the behaviour of these men, although well-intentioned, is fundamentally insulting to women, *and* to be able to move to a position of reflecting that back in a way that makes it accessible to them. Without that intention E's behaviour is little different from the collusion of the woman who "puts up with" such behaviour. It may feel different on the inside, and it may not be a victim response, but it still gives a message of tacit acceptance to men.

The talk with E allowed me to reframe an encounter at a party with a crusty General who had made blatantly sexist remarks.

It took me at least an hour to realise that that was a compliment. ... If I could have taken your view of "this person is trying to be friends with me", ... I would not have treated him so harshly.

Taped conversation 19th July 1993

But the point is not just be pleasanter to old Generals, but to be in a better position to show them another view of the world.

In dealings with men, women have an advantage as inhabitants of a multi-dimensional reality. We often under-value that advantage and lose it in face of the dominant view, allowing ourselves to become willing victims, and obligingly hiding our "misconceptions" away, or sharing them only with other women. If we act on that knowledge of multiple possibilities we have the opportunity to take control of our own lives and exercise influence in the world.

If women hold on to that perception and combine it with the fiery power described in Chapters 4 and 6 it is a formidable force with a compelling voice.

Naomi Wolf's power feminism (Wolf 1993) attributes women's preference for connection and intimacy over power to nurture rather than nature and points to a passion that many women have lost touch with:

Each of us born healthy and given half a chance in earliest life, was once an unbridled megalomaniac. Before little girls are playing with ... dolls' houses, they are having fantasies of absolute dominion.

Wolf 1993 p. 279

This is certainly not my remembered experience, but then I didn't have the "half chance" referred to of being tended by my father and having a mother who valued "*her own authority as well as her caring skills*". This view offers an alternative interpretation of the conception

fantasy (Chapter 11). Were the walls of the ice cube an early version of the glass ceiling? Could it be a metaphor for a socialisation process, common to many women that “stops” the natural will to power early on?

Even if the power feminists are right, it does not mean that women do not *also* seek connection, nor that women need to become oppressors as soon as they escape from the victim position. The need is to step out of that frame which traps us in the Victim triangle. There is a call for the *and-and* thinking which Wolf refers to, significantly in the context of abortion which lies right at the gut centre of women's creative power.

We can demand the luxury of both/and thinking: defend abortion rights, and undertake anti-abortion responsibilities.

Wolf 1993 p. 279

Wolf calls for an *eroticism of care* which is again congruent with a view of female power which intertwines creativity, sexuality, and the authority of personal presence.

So how do we tap this passion, the vital fire energy that I so often lack? I find two clues in my journal. The first is an account of a particularly successful personal development course; the second an exploration of that fire energy and an account of an associated co-counselling session.

The personal development course stands out as one of the best I have facilitated, at a time when I least expected it. There was a deep level of sharing by participants many of whom made significant changes in their lives, and who had vivid memories of it up to two years later in discussion with me. One young man made a cathartic breakthrough which he continued to explore and integrate in correspondence with me afterwards. For me the course coincided with a crisis in a close relationship. Instead of being pre-occupied and unavailable to students as I would have expected, I seemed to be super aware on a number of different levels, and able to work with enhanced sensitivity and perceptiveness:

... today I am experiencing something I have never experienced before. Extremes of elation and despair at the same time. I am elated about the course which I think is the best I've done; in dread and despair about what is happening in my personal life. It is amazing that the one is not wiping the other. Remarkable that I have kept going. ... I was in touch at a deeper level. ... Always I was saying what I wanted to, and felt eloquent.

Journal 17th May 1989

What gets forgotten in this entry is that I had attended a powerful personal workshop resulting in a violent migraine during the previous week. The work done during the workshop and in a

co-counselling session after it released powerful energy behind long repressed emotions, and this possibly enabled me to operate at a higher level of emotional competence than usual.

The other journal entry includes a vigorous looking brain map bearing the central legend "*Male Control and Female Power*". The energy of it leaps off the page at me, I notice how quickly it dives in to religious issues, how vitriolic it is, and delight in its energy, resisting the impulse to censor its wild, attacking generalisations.

Opposite is this journal entry:

Isis, Astarte, Diana,

Hecate, Demeter, Kali, Innana.

I wake at three with this ringing over and over in my head. As if something is trying to break through into consciousness.

Journal 5th October 1992

The entry continues to explore related thoughts in the light of some personal work the previous evening, questioning when I will take hold of my power. I refer to reading a description of healing by Andrew Harvey in *A Journey in Ladakh* and comment on the violence of the healing, then continue:

And suddenly the incantation gets its meaning through. These are violent powers. They tap my rage. So they are dangerous and frightening. I am afraid of that rage as a destructive force.

We talk of Shakti and fiery energy but underestimate the power of the elemental force to destroy. Fire destroys. Bonfires get out of hand. Fire kills people. Really. Baptism of fire — that HURTS. Phoenix arising from the ashes means something has been destroyed.

It is the very antithesis of gentle Jesus.

Is it the rage of the 9 million women burnt for being witches?

Journal 5th October 1992

Certainly it feels like rage *on behalf* of those women. I go on to make links between the migraine and nausea that I felt when I was woken by the incantation, and other occasions when breakthrough personal experiences have been accompanied by similar physical symptoms, as in the session prior to the course described above.

Next day in a co-counselling session I talk to fire as encountered in a recent dream, and discover the concept of the "*fire that does not burn*" which is both beautiful and frightening, and essential for balancing my emotional and intuitive side.

Flames red, purple, magnificent ...

Come! You are the balance.

Your fire balances the water.

You are what melts the ice cube.

You are the energy I need,

The energy I have waited and longed and looked for.

Journal 5th October 1992

If we take the goddess, Kali as an example of such power, we immediately see the potential of such power, and at the same time why it can be threatening. Kali is the Hindu triple goddess of creation, preservation, and destruction. She is the dark mother who eats her children, the lover who devours her partner. Bringing this down to our own human level, a woman is someone who creates life, nurtures and feeds it, who in sexual terms can encompass, include, surround, embrace, and enclose a man. And a woman can also swallow, devour, take, engulf, capture, and castrate if she chooses. In our culture only the fearful and destructive side of Kali is generally acknowledged (Walker 1983). So it is small wonder that this vital fiery energy is difficult to hold on to for women.

Connecting with and keeping alight "the fire that doesn't burn" has been a key theme of my inner work, and of energy balancing in acupuncture treatments. It is easily doused by my own water energy and eclipsed by the energy of others.

Most of the time this power remains untapped. When it is tapped the potential for risk-taking, trust-building, and authentic communication is, I suspect, almost unlimited. Only rarely, especially in mixed gender groups, have I witnessed the tapping of that power and the freeing of it to do its work. This happened at least for a limited time on the following two occasions.

In 1989 I co-facilitated a group of yoga teachers in a personal development theme during a residential week. A key issue turned out to be the difficulty men and women have in communicating with, and understanding, each other. On one evening we split the group into separate gender groups. My male colleague was surprised and dismayed at the poverty of the interaction in the men's group, and at his inability to break through the general resistance to talking about feelings or issues that deeply concerned anyone. The women, by contrast, needed little prompting from me to move spontaneously into sharing at a very deep level.

Problems arose at the time scheduled for the men to rejoin the women. The cathartic work taking place in the women's group meant that they felt too vulnerable to receive the men,

and requested a time extension. The men consequently felt threatened and rejected, as well as disappointed at their own experience compared with the evidently more meaningful women's session. When the groups eventually merged, and after negotiating around these vulnerabilities, the men expressed themselves eager, desperate even, to understand the experience of the women, and to establish communication and mutual understanding at a feelings level. At first this seemed unlikely to succeed as this account shows:

A lot of anger came from the women that men won't risk the vulnerability of expressing their feelings; and that they often hurt women when the women take that risk — which means that women learn not to do it either. ... The great cry that went up from both sides was "tell me how you feel, PLEASE! I want to understand". And some very risky communications happened, and succeeded as a result.

Journal 31st July 1989

I have described the second occasion in Chapter 12. It involves the same team manager whose confrontation by his supervisor I referred to earlier in this chapter. A head of emotional steam related to the dynamics in the team gathered momentum during the week, getting drowned around mid-week in the weight of unexpressed feelings and the anxiety around either containing or expressing them. Physical outdoor activities which became metaphors for relationships helped to overcome this stuckness. Eventually a woman found her power and channelled the energy into a careful and passionate session of confrontation and problem-solving which lasted all night. The release which this brought swept aside defensiveness and status differences between men and women. It defied description other than by using the word love, of an uncompromising kind that challenged evasion, pushed tirelessly for solutions and celebrated difference, while giving us all the experience of being united in a common humanity.

This energy is powerful and it involves risk at a deep level: either we associate it with qualities considered in our culture to be masculine, and so have to put conditioning aside to develop and use them; or we recognise that it is deeply rooted in our biology and creative sexuality with its connection to the ancient goddess traditions. At a more superficial level, as a facilitator, I fear to invoke a force which could be construed as sexual in the social rather than the creative sense. For men and women use their sexuality all the time in interaction, whether social, emotional, or intellectual, but they rarely admit to or talk about the fact. So the word "sexual" retains a strong association with physical sexual behaviour. Small wonder then in Huff's words (Huff 1990) *"that men and women are still uncomfortable with women in the workplace — deeply so"* Huff attributes this to men's habit of relating to women in a patriarchal way outside the work place as mothers, sisters, wives etc.

There are occasional islands of task activity, periods of time in which the sex of the participants is forgotten, but no one really forgets the sex of those they work with and most men seem to deal with it by reinforcing hierarchical structures within the work place with even more deeply entrenched dominance structures from outside the work place.

Huff 1990 p.11

Huff lists several strategies for women moving out of the role of organization wife. They put the onus on women taking charge of their lives, and include saying "no" more clearly and more often; letting go of the need to be indispensable in the caring role; demanding more of men and not letting them off the hook of attention to detail and feelings; being less forgiving, more ready to complain, and prepared to leave instead of being constrained by loyalty. She stresses the need to focus energy:

Unfocussed energy and unending hope are perhaps the ideal combination for raising young children; they are more problematic in intimate relationships with other adults and are absolutely disastrous in the workplace.

Huff 1990 p.11

In my experience we do not find that focus by ignoring or forgetting gender differences or pretending we are androgynous, but by accepting our biology, diving right into the richness of our sexual-creativity, our shakti energy, and finding the passion that will release our voice.

Baring and Cashford (1993) describe the circular movement of the yin-yang symbol creating a distinction that is "*provisional, alternating, continually in play*", offering a metaphor for the dance of communication between men and women, and the interplay of feminine and masculine in our lives. They refer to the feminine and masculine as:

different modes of consciousness, ... of experiencing and expressing life ... available to any human being of any gender. The archetypal masculine mode of consciousness has come historically to be associated with linear thinking, intellect, reason, Logos; the archetypal feminine mode of consciousness with analogical thinking, intuition, feeling, Eros. Each needs the other to be whole, and when either predominates both are thrown out of balance ...

Baring and Cashford 1991 p. 672

Making a Song and Dance — energy, sound, and movement

This chapter continues with the theme of voice, and explores why the conditioning to “sit still and keep quiet” can not only cause relatively trivial problems in public speaking, but actually inhibits a need to keep moving and making sound which may be fundamental to our health and energy.

In terms of the Heron model, a sedentary and/or busy life with an emphasis on operating most of the time at a conceptual and practical level discourages physical, emotional and imaginal expression, and gives little opportunity for embodied self-expression or contemplation. So we become disconnected from any source of renewal or sense of the sacred.

What is it that links an embarrassed speaker who dries up in front of the overhead projector with an Eastern whirling dervish performing a mystic spiral dance? This is not a frivolous question, but first struck me strongly and intuitively as I sought solutions to my own tendency to paralysis as a facilitator, explored in Chapter 9.

When I noticed the link between these presentation problems and some more fundamental experiences in my own history, I sensed the existence of a complex and interwoven pattern of connections manifesting at both a surface and a deep level, and resonating personally and universally. The aspects of my own personal development were, first, the loss of, and search for, my own voice, both for singing with and for speaking my truth; second, the difficulties I had accepting the need to be visible in my career when I moved from social work into personal development training; and third, my tendency to freeze physically and mentally under pressure, together with my (ongoing) reluctance to take physical exercise of any sort.

This chapter sets out to chart my progress in feeling for and uncovering this pattern. It explores the relationship between sound and movement, the potential of this combination for releasing emotional and healing energy and creativity, and the implications of this for the facilitation process, for members of organisations, and indeed for the world. I have drawn on material from individuals in groups I have worked with learning presentation skills and assertiveness; from my own experience in groups, both as facilitator and as group member; and from experiments with a variety of apparently superficial techniques which appear to connect mind, body, and sound in interesting ways. I will start by describing the first noticings that drew my attention to the possibility that here was a thread to follow.

Let us return briefly to the speaker in front of his overhead projector, who was a member of my first Presentation Skills workshop that aimed to help people with nerves, terror, and blocks similar to those I had experienced myself. I subsequently ran sixteen more of these three-day courses for 12 people, and also worked with a group of partners in a small accountancy firm, and did some one to one work with two people. Robin was an otherwise

competent professional who regularly dried up when speaking, because of nervousness. He was the first of many to receive the very simple advice to "Come clean when you dry. Tell the audience that you have totally forgotten what you were going to say next." Presenters found that this had several advantages.

- Usually, by taking pressure off the brain, memory recovered spontaneously.
- It gave them "permission" to study notes.
- It made them *feel* more "real" and in control.
- It *looked* much more in control than standing with flapping jaw and burning face.
- By keeping the audience informed, it avoided antagonising them.
- It often gained the audience's support.

Other allied problems shared by people who came on the course were woodenness in their presentation, either in voice tone and modulation, or in physical posture and movement. Some would not move at all; others glued their eyes to the slide screen; others looked at the audience, but without seeing, just skating over the field of vision; and many used minimal gestures involving the head but not the shoulders, kept their elbows pinned at the waist, or held on to one arm as if afraid that it might escape. All these habits contributed to what I called the "plastic personality" which was like a strait jacket that otherwise confident people put on when they walked centre stage to present. It was as if the eyes of the audience caught them like a rabbit frozen in the beam of the headlights. It felt very familiar to me, and I introduced exercises into the workshop that had been useful to me, to help presenters overcome this syndrome. Always the message was: keep moving, talk to the audience, get them to talk to you, don't let the rabbit freeze.

So why did I ask the question at the beginning of this chapter? I wanted to explore the sense I have that the presenter and his overhead projector and the dancing dervish stand at almost opposite ends of some continuum. At one end, beyond the static behaviour of our presenter, I see matter, and at the other, spirit, the cosmic dance of Shiva. And something half-understood from quantum physics (Capra 1983) reminds me that matter is energy; that the particles of matter can also be waves, and that matter is a collection of vibrating and dancing patterns.

These two extremes are, therefore, not that far apart, so that it makes more sense to take the ends of this tentative spectrum and bend them towards each other to form, not a circle, but a spiral. For the spiral metaphor not only contains stillness, as does the circle, but it also allows progression and retreat, movement upwards and downwards. I then see our presenter being able to move along that spiral path in the direction of becoming a more resourceful, more competent, more real presenter, by using various tools of sound and movement. In that way he becomes more human and less the victim of circumstance. Maybe this is just a very complicated way of saying that the presenter's mind is trapped by his body, and that this is simply a body-mind continuum. But then it would seem that he could find a way of achieving "mind over matter" which would leave the body behind, and which is precisely what

I want to avoid in this exploration. It is not an either-or but an and-and experience that I want to trace.

There is evidence from those who have taken this path in order to explore and expand the potential of being human that the ultimate experience it brings is a mystical experience of oneness with the universe, the stars, rocks, and other human beings. I have stepped onto this path from time to time, moving from somewhere back beyond our presenter along to a point where the concept of being one with the universe no longer seems incomprehensible or ridiculous as it once did. Once or twice I have glimpsed something mystical and exciting for a few seconds — long enough to believe it, but not long enough to carry that conviction consistently.

I have attempted to divide the experiences I will now describe into three categories: the first, **Sound, Voice, and Language**, explores the development of language and my search for my voice; the second, **Emotional Energy**, concerns re-connecting with emotional energy, understanding its source and why it becomes unavailable; and the third, **Disruption, Chaos, and Creativity**, describes ways of shifting out of habitual paradigms in order to access more creative and resourceful states.

These experiences do not take kindly to such a division, protesting that they are diminished by not being allowed to spread energetically across all three categories. However, the need to think and analyse requires sentences and paragraphs, sections and sub-sections, even when, or especially when, the subject of inquiry is the need to break free of such structures. A final section, **Making a Song and Dance**, aims to draw these threads together.

Sound, Voice, and Language

My own experience of paralysis affected limbs, speech, and thought processes. It was a state that I brought with me from the private world of home, exaggerated both by the shock of arriving in the public world, and by the perception that people had expectations of me; a state of passivity and emptiness. I not only did not express my thoughts and needs, but did not usually know what they were. If I did know they seemed so unworthy or so preposterous that I would explode rather than let them out. Effective strategies I have explored for overcoming recurrences of this state involve movement, making sound, anything that will shift what seems to be a freeze throughout the body, a trap door in the throat, and a blanket of fog in the brain.

At a very simple level, if I find paralysis creeping upon me, I will walk up and down, or shift my position in the group. In the same way I find that going for a walk helps the flow of ideas in solving intractable problems. An example of a mental shift resulting from physical movement is my structuring of this thesis. Only when I left the computer screen, spread chapters across the floor, and crawled around shifting piles of paper and collecting books from different parts of the house, did the pattern of the whole begin to emerge as something I could work at. The biggest breakthrough I had as a presenter was learning to speak

informally to a group of eighty people spread about on the floor of a ballroom. I achieved it by walking up and down as I spoke, not just pacing, but striding out, really covering the floor with energy and whole body movement that flowed with words and gestures. This helped me to project my voice and also enabled me to have eye contact with most of the audience. By contrast, my most wooden performance was probably when my movements were restricted by having to wear a microphone with a short lead.

Some of the techniques I use were derived from a voice workshop given by Frankie Armstrong, which not only helped me to accept that I might be able to sing, but also increased my confidence generally, and gave me a number of exercises that I still use to limber up face and jaw and relax the throat before meeting with a new group. It is not only the physical quality of voice production and posture which is affected in all of these examples, but my state of mind.

Voice Work

In developing her method and style, Frankie had studied folk music all over the world, and particularly emphasised the fact that this music originated as an accompaniment to work in cultures where the participative connection between song, body and the earth was unbroken. It provided a rhythm and encouragement to hard manual labour, and body movement was therefore an essential part of understanding it and of projecting the voice. She had the group chant as we raked and sowed and swept; she had us calling cattle home across imaginary meadows; she had us communicate with fellow goat herds from one alp to another. And in the process we summoned all the children from the neighbouring shopping precinct who came and peered in at the windows in fascination. Frankie also had us discuss our reactions, notice the process and approach the business of using the voice in the spirit of inquiry (her first exercise invited us to describe our relationship with our voice), thus involving as many of our faculties as possible. It was my first experience of my voice that was without shame, and the first time I began to understand making sound and communicating as a whole body activity which I could assist and influence with my imagination and thoughtful preparation.

In the first chapter of his book *"The Singing Cure"*, Paul Newham emphasises the importance of the link between sound and movement in early forms of language. He describes early communication as "an acoustic gesture, a voice-dance".

The composition and choreography of this primeval song and dance was not an abstract representation of emotions but a direct expression of affect and instinct. ...

Because such communication demanded the total involvement of body and voice, it was necessary to re-enact this involvement even when expressing emotions in retrospect. ...

In the absence of words, the body and voice had to assume a thousand different shapes in the course of describing a single day's events.

Newham 1993 p. 21

Several thoughts come to me when I read this passage. First, I am struck by the energy and movement involved in such communication; second, that re-enacting the emotions with voice and body in order to communicate reminds me of the activity of catharsis in co-counselling, and might serve a similar function; third, that the language we now use has a richness which is more suited to expressing complexities of an abstract nature; fourth that some people fall between two stools, as it were, having lost the ability to express experience vividly through gesture and voice, and not having a developed skill with spoken language; finally I begin to understand the powerful effect of mime which engages directly with the audience's emotions, and to see the purpose of teaching mime which removes the verbal element in communication, and encourages us to be more fully present in our expression. Then, as an afterthought I wonder how Newham can *know* this, or is it just based on speculation and carefully researched guesswork, rather as William Golding (1961) must have created his vivid representation of primitive language in *The Inheritors*. His description also resembles Langer's account of the development of language as described by Heron (Heron 1992 p. 110.)

My first three reactions are related. The spoken language we now use is capable of conveying nuances of abstract thought, it has the flexibility and precision to reflect the complexity of our lives, and we can use it successfully without the need for face to face communication. But we pay a price in losing that *necessary* connection with emotions and human contact. And most of us, most of the time, fail even to notice that we have sustained a loss. Whilst delighting in the richness and choice of words available to us, we tend not to notice that words are limited without the accompaniment of facial expression, voice tone and emphasis, breathing, and gesture. We do communicate in this way both awarely and unawarely, but watching a mime artist may raise awareness of how we under use these media. If we trace our "progress" from the *performance* of communication with speakers "sculpturing and orchestrating their bodies and their voices like singing acrobats" (Newham 1993); through the static mode of present day converse, in which we move lips, eyes, eyebrows, and hands only rarely, particularly in Northern European cultures; to the orphaned status of the printed word, we can see how impoverished our communication has, in certain senses, become. This is not to undervalue the richness and beauty and complexity of language, but to say that in becoming more conceptually sophisticated, it has lost emotional and kinaesthetic power and energy. It is a different experience from that which Newham describes. Our mode of communication overlooks, and often seeks to avoid, the critical role of emotion, both for the receiver and for the communicator. And so our very language contributes to the burden of emotional baggage we carry around by depriving us of the opportunity of reliving an experience in the telling. Such emotional communication tends to be frowned upon and the speaker told: "there's no need to make such a song and dance about it"!

The singing dance of pre-verbal communication then had three functions: it served to enable people to exchange knowledge about the environment and their feelings towards it; it acted as a ritual celebration of a connection with the elements through a process of becoming; and it served as a channel for the release of accumulated affective excitement.

With the development of words, this sympathetic relationship with the world gradually disappeared, ... With the increasing abstraction of words it became possible to communicate the danger of an approaching bear by simply shouting 'bear', the meaning of which remained unaltered even when uttered with an emotional detachment, a vocal monotone and a physical stasis.

Newham 1993 p. 24

The habit of being *able* to communicate without emotion, has perhaps led to feeling that we *ought* to eliminate emotion, particularly in more public and formal contexts, with the result that communications with emotional content are often censored or discounted. The resulting impersonal style is a device we can all use to distance ourselves from uncomfortable ideas or decisions.

Language and Body Language

The fourth reaction I noted to Newham's description of early communication (concerning people who have neither emotional richness nor facility with language in communicating) reminds me of the work of Basil Bernstein which I explored in my first thesis completed many years ago for my professional social work qualification. Reading my early thesis now from a new paradigm perspective is a strange and uncomfortable experience, and the generalisations it makes based on evidence of quantitative research make it largely irrelevant here. Bernstein distinguished between the "public language" of working class people, noted for its "restricted code" of expression and the "formal language" of middle class speakers who use an "elaborated code".

The frequency and dependency upon the categorical statement in a public language reinforces the personal at the expense of the logical, limits range of behaviour and learning, and conditions types of reaction ...

Bernstein 1959

Many women on the Returning to Work course whether they be middle or working class, native English speakers, or recently arrived in this country, identify becoming articulate as an important goal on the way to realising their independence, assertiveness, or self-fulfilment. It may be, like L, that they never had it, came out of school with the label "thick", and received nothing but destructive criticism at home. L started to identify the problem by wishing that she could "talk posh", but discussion brought her to the conclusion, that although she still wished that, what was more important was to be able to express what was in her head, and to talk about things that she currently had no words for. Other women may have lost their

ability to be articulate through being immersed in domesticity and conversing mainly with children and at a practical, rather than a conceptual level with other adults. Others may or may not have these problems, and are also contending with the learning of a new language and culture. What these women are also doing is naming themselves, finding their own identity, and defining what Betty Friedan (1963) called "the problem that has no name".

The vast majority of women who come on this course are driven by the search for their own potential. They have considered their domestic existence and said a firm "no" to the question "is this all there is?" and are seeking their own development whatever form that may take. Often they have made a specific decision to avoid returning to previous occupations even when they have the skills and qualifications which would make this the easier option. The men, on the other hand, who are a small minority, see the course as a route to a job, seem not to care what that job is, and have little self-awareness or conception of self-development.

An overwhelming number of these women report a lack of conversation with their male partners which increases their sense of isolation, and deprives them of the opportunity for more rewarding conversation. This is a phenomenon identified by Deborah Tannen (1990) under the heading "Put that paper down and talk to me!", a shorthand which echoes with my own experience and that of many of the Returning to Work women. This is explored further in Chapter 14.

Bernstein may make no reference to differences in the language of men and women, but one thing that he says about public language users strikes me because I believe it applies to many men I have encountered when they are invited to explore and talk about their feelings.

He [Bernstein] notes one consequence of this impersonality in the tough terms given to objects which evoke tender feelings in order to make their discussion socially acceptable and bearable. ... Tender feelings are highly individual and therefore cause isolation. Their expression is therefore avoided by the public language user ... an unfamiliar experience causing embarrassment, distress and hostility towards the object of arousal.

Bell 1969 p.69

The process of alienation through the subsequent development of language has powerful implications for the way in which post-verbal people exchange information, particularly when they feel threatened. This relates to the gap phenomenon described by Morris Berman which is discussed in Chapter 9.

John Heron describes this alienation in terms of a "judgmental act" which is the result of learning to handle concepts through language. We no longer need to combine creative imagination with perception to understand what we see but "see it over against us as an object".

And that leaves us in the role of disengaged observing subject, peering at a world that is separated from us. This I call the subject-object split. Once we identify with it, we relegate into

relative unawareness our felt participation in the world and the imaginal component in perception.

Heron 1992 p.77

It is significant that I came to discover, understand and value my own process of intuitive body knowing through an experience in which I felt alienated (or counter-alienated) from the intellectual discussion in the Bath Research Group, and which I called "falling into the gaps between the words". The experience allowed me to discover the richness of the ground in the gap, and to link it with other examples of the figure-ground switch where a sudden flip of perspective had given me a new insight that felt almost like an altered state of consciousness. I believe it was indeed an altered state, a consciousness of participation. These experiences are explored fully in Chapter 5.

If we are communicating from a state of being alienated from our body knowing, the body message becomes a threat, something to be suppressed. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, body language becomes a means of concealing and distorting, rather than enriching, a communication. We have the mask of the poker face, heavy make-up, and tinted or reflective glasses. The very woodenness of the presenter described earlier is an attempt to edit his nervousness out of the presentation, with the result that any spark of inspiration is edited out as well. In this way we develop the defensive body "armouring" identified and worked with by Wilhelm Reich, see below.

Some figures, derived I believe from research by Mehrabian and Argyle (Gelb 1988), are widely used to emphasize the importance of body language to those learning presentation, selling, and interview skills. They claim that 93% of a communication is conveyed non-verbally. 55% of that impact is claimed to come from visual cues by posture, gestures, and eye contact, and 38% from voice tone and inflection, leaving only 7% for content. These figures serve for me as a shorthand for the levels at which communication operates and confirm that, underlying our intellectual command of language, the pre-verbal agenda is still operating. Fear of presenting, for those who do not have control of that agenda, is fear of exposure, of the body getting its message across and revealing them and their emotions in a hostile environment. What "our presenter's" body might like to do is curl up in a foetal position, have the earth swallow it up, or take flight, as from a grizzly bear. No wonder woodenness results as this 20th century professional struggles with these urges while trying to maintain a calm exterior. Exploration of the "worst fantasies" of students on presentation skills courses re-inforces this scenario. Their drawings represent, on the one hand the body taking over, and regressing to a state of being out of control of bodily functions, and on the other the breakdown of technology leaving them with nothing to hide behind, having only this unreliable body as a resource.

My sister-in-law, who worked for many years as a psychiatric social worker, and who is blind, has given me a new insight into the function of body language in releasing emotion, rather than as a part of a communication. In working with emotionally disturbed children and their parents, she attributes her success at least in part to the *absence* of visual communication with her clients. Her belief is that, on the one hand, she was not distracted from the underlying voice tone message by contradictory visual messages; and on the other, that the lack of eye contact removed a potential threat to her clients. Thus in the early stages of a relationship she would find herself at an advantage in being able to by-pass the masks; and at a later stage, her clients would be less inhibited, and able to grimace and squirm freely without embarrassment in ways which could help painful truths into the open.

Heron (1992) resonates with and deepens the context of my sister-in-law's experience in his description of feeling and hearing. He proposes that hearing in the Perceptual/Imaginal mode is very close to feeling in the Affective mode. He claims it to be prime, and while memories of the evocative power of music draw me to agree, I also wonder about the power of smell and its stronger claim to closeness to feeling. However, hearing as a tool of communication, is not only more commonly available to human beings than smell, at least at a conscious level, but is certainly more highly developed. Heron backs his claim by describing the capacity of hearing for comprehensive and multi-directional precision which "*initiates us into spatial, temporal and directional infinity*" (Heron 1992 p. 101). The accuracy of hearing that "*can measure and ... quantify unerringly*" allows us to listen to the unspoken as well as the spoken message either intuitively and therapeutically as in the case of my sister-in-law, or rather more intrusively using, for example, a lie detector to measure voice vibrations.

Students of presentation skills and assertiveness with whom I work frequently have severe inhibitions about producing enough sound to be audible even in a small group, and I need to find ways of helping them to release the sound. Learning to project the voice to an audience is a major challenge, let alone modulating it, or raising the voice to express assertive anger. Newham comments on the effect of communication becoming gradually less of a participative experience with the development of language:

In many early cultures where the notion of animism prevailed, every object and being was believed to be endowed with a soul or spirit; ... when people sang of the bear, they became one with the animal's soul. In the same way, through their song they partook of the sun and the moon, the earth and the river.

With the development of words, this sympathetic relationship with the world gradually disappeared, ... the sung tones of affect and experience became appropriated by a spoken code of linguistics. ...

The effects of this abstract use of language were threefold. First, the sympathetic relationship with the essence of natural elements ... was eroded. Second, men and women grew distant

from the experience of their own emotions. Third, the tonal range of acoustic qualities and rhythms ... was replaced by a comparatively monotonal system of words.

Newham 1993 pp. 23-24

The monotonal and static style of communication used in most work settings, may favour analytical thought and factual reporting, but it serves to straitjacket any emotions we do seek to express, inhibits creativity, and stunts confidence. In order to use language to influence or inspire we need to develop our use of voice tone and body language. In my work as a Presentation Skills trainer, introducing exercises which involve making exaggerated movements and unrestricted sound (as opposed to speech) has been a key part in overcoming students' inhibitions and helping them to project both their voices and their personalities. These have included Frankie Armstrong's "calling" exercises, "hamming up" speeches in declamatory style, and switching to intimate story-telling mode. These all serve to stretch students' presentational wings and demonstrate the impact of different gestures, stances and tones.

Voicing my Self

Rhythm, movement, and sound have been powerful in achieving significant breakthroughs in my own development, as the following three experiences show.

The first took place at the end of Frankie's Voice Workshop described above. We were working in small groups in which each individual took it in turn to make their own sound to the accompaniment of the humming of the rest of the group. We closed our eyes, held hands, and signalled each turn by pressing the hand of the next person. I experienced the delight of hearing my own sound soar and dive over and under the humming in a song without words which was a glorious release and discovery to me.

The second experience of finding my voice took place on a women's workshop in Cornwall where we used drumming, dancing and chanting to raise healing energy and connect with our female power at various sacred sites in the area. On the first occasion we did this at a fogou, or ancient burial chamber. We circled the fogou, drumming and singing the same short song for over an hour while each group member took it in turn to enter the dark, cold, chamber. As I returned from the silence, I felt a physical release which seemed in some mysterious way to liberate my voice, allowing me to sing with others and hear myself in tune.

The third example of release and self-discovery at a workshop led by Jill Purce on overtone chanting links with the next section on emotional energy.

Near the end of the second and final day of the workshop we were simply told to chant our own name (as described in Chapter 9). My mind concentrated on that, experimenting with the shape and tone of the sound; my body vibrated with the sound as it had, in a very

unaccustomed way, for the past two days; my imagination became filled with vivid images, overwhelming grief released itself, but more as a physical release than an emotional one: like taps of tears and sweat being turned on full. Afterwards I felt that I had experienced a mystical encounter with another self, a powerful belief that is still with me.

On each occasion the combination of sustained sound and rhythmic movement shifted me into an altered state of consciousness allowing me an insight and understanding I would not otherwise have had. The movement may consist of free-flowing motor activity, or it might be the rhythmic, repetitive beat of a drum or shake of a rattle, remaining steady or rising to a crescendo, or it might be micro movement as in the vibration of sound through the bones of the head and in the sinal cavities. Each of these experiences have enabled me to access more of my potential, becoming at once more grounded in myself, and more confident in giving out effectively in the world. In April 1991 I record the connection between being seen and being heard, noticing that being invisible seemed to go with having no voice:

Energy seems to be connected with the jill-girl who runs and sings (who I first got to know at the Jill Purce workshop). If I vanish I lose myself — like I lost her.

Being visible and being audible and singing seem to have some connection.

And all of them and moving connect with energy.

What 's required is the all-singing, all-dancing Jill.

Journal April 6th 1991

Emotional Energy

It was not appropriate to explore in depth the emotional reasons for "our presenter's" difficulties on a course designed to teach a business skill. However, both he and several others with similar difficulties reappeared over time on another development course admitting the need to look behind their "presenting" problems. In this section I look at the work of a number of people I have encountered in the course of my investigation into my own presenting paralysis.

Jill Purce uses ancient voice techniques for healing and meditation:

My aim is not modest, I am trying to re-enchant the world, which means to make it magical through chanting. ...

There is a profound sense of disenchantment in Western society. I think this is because, quite literally, there is no chant in our lives any more. All the situations in which members of traditional cultures came together to chant have gradually been eroded away, so we feel disempowered and helpless in a desacralized world.

Jill Purce Workshop flier 1995

Paul Newham echoes this view:

Throughout the world the fundamental right to vocal expression has existed for centuries in the form of communal singing. At the lakeside, in the cotton fields, in battle and in love, in the funeral procession and at the wedding feast, in the mountains of Argentina and in the gospel halls of New Orleans, singing has been the most arousing and enlivening communal activity since the earliest of times. However, in the modern era of the Western world the culture of singing has been lost to a great extent. The conditioning we receive from parents and teachers who tell us we cannot sing, the sense of inadequacy instilled in those who do not read music and the overbearing preoccupations of everyday life — all these have led to a silencing of the true voice which in fact everyone possesses.

Newham 1993 p.13-14

My experience of a two day non-residential with Jill Purce gave me insight into what might be achieved through the voice when working at greater intensity over a longer period:

Through the therapeutic use of the voice we are able to bring these areas of hurt and pain safely up into the light of clarity and illumination, often ridding ourselves of traumas which have beset us since early childhood.

Jill Purce Workshop flier 1995

Purce's starting point is the breath and the voice. She works specifically with the ancient technique of overtone chanting, using the mouth and sinus cavities to produce a bell-like sound over the hum or chant of the voice. My experience was that this approach worked on the psyche to produce a meditative state and the spontaneous physical release of emotion. By contrast, Newham's Voice Movement Therapy appears to use a more physiological approach, working with the body and the imagination to release sound.

Newham identifies five strands which are interwoven in the process of Voice Movement Therapy, which, briefly summarized are as follows:

1. Ideokinesis, a method of using images of the body mechanisms to stimulate specific muscular responses.
2. Breathing enhancement, relearning breathing patterns so that they are appropriately distributed between the chest and the abdomen.
3. Placement, involving the use of images of placing the voice in either the head, chest, or abdominal areas, in order to affect the voice timbre.
4. Movement to release muscular patterning that produces tension associated with vocalisation.
5. Massage to soften and warm connective tissue and allow the release of toxins.

Newham traces the development of modern voice therapy back to its roots in the ancient practices of ritual healing, acknowledges the fundamental influence of Freud and Jung, and explores the more recent and specific history in the pioneering work of Wilhelm Reich and his pupil, Alexander Lowen, Paul Moses, and Alfred Wolfsohn. He also pays tribute to the current work and commitment of Jill Purce and Frankie Armstrong.

Reich was a pupil of Freud who was the first psychotherapist to work with patients directly through the body rather than with words. Reich's treatment aimed to break through what he termed the muscular and character armour which a person developed involuntarily as protection against the demands of the instincts and the outside world. Reich did not work directly on the voice but focused on the breath to achieve emotional and physical release through sound and body movement, of which vocal expression was an indirect but significant part. His pupil, Lowen extended Reich's work by working, not only with the breath, as Reich had done, but also by moving the body, and by paying attention to the sounds emitted. Paul Moses was the first of the therapists in Newham's history to study the voice specifically and he believed that the voice directly reflected psychological state. Moses only started to consider singing as a therapy for the voice towards the end of his life, and paid tribute to the powerful work of Alfred Wolfsohn in this field.

Wolfsohn developed his method through his own need to cure himself of a severe war neurosis. He knew that he needed to cathart his fear and guilt, resulting from his experiences in the trenches in 1917, by reproducing the terrible sounds he had heard and which continued to haunt him. In curing himself he needed to develop the range of his voice, and was able to extend it to a range of more than eight octaves. In his subsequent work he explored the potential of the voice "as a probe and a mirror, investigating and reflecting the many aspects of the human psyche." Wolfsohn was strongly influenced by Jung, and not surprisingly was particularly drawn to his shadow archetype:

Wolfsohn recognised that if the voice was to be employed as an expression of the true nature of the psyche in its entirety, it would have to establish a connection with the shadow. This meant that the voice had to be permitted to yell, scream, sob and give voice to the animalistic, primal, pre-verbal utterances which are part of the rightful expression of the shadow.

Newham 1993 p. 89

A number of strands draw me strongly to Newham's work. One strand is that I remember being strongly in tune with voices as a child, referring to different moods and personalities expressed in people's voice tone by colour, in a way that seemed natural to me, but odd to others. Another strand is that I have often noticed thin, strangled, or muffled voices in group members on commercial courses I have run, but have seen no way of working with them in the context. I have very few records of these noticings, and suspect that this is because I know I still have personal work to do in this area, and have been allowing myself to avoid it.

A third strand is the important work I did do with Frankie Armstrong, and later with Jill Purce, and the impact Frankie's methods had on others when I passed them on in informal mini workshops during co-counselling events. The fourth strand is the strong connection, through its history and use of the cathartic method, of this approach with co-counselling. I have attended workshops associated with co-counselling where I have experienced the power of Reichian bodywork, experimented with bioenergetic exercises, and heard about the effects of the deep tissue massage called "Rolfing" to which Newham refers.

Newham quotes Herbert Spencer who proposed that the function of singing in pre-verbal cultures was to "release emotional energy, giving vent to and dispersing the psychological excitation generated by the vital experiences of life". The principles of co-counselling are designed with a similar cathartic purpose, to release tension and stress through the opportunity to express suppressed emotion. The techniques of co-counselling give us a route back to that fuller and more elemental form of expression, with the objective of producing healing and insight.

As I explore these connections I see an important difference emerging between the methods of co-counselling and the work of Wolfsohn and Newham. Catharsis in co-counselling as I have known it aims to rid the person of the weight of negative emotions which drain their energy. This is an immensely liberating process which does indeed bring new insight and energy in its wake. It is an excellent starting point for people whose "dustbins" are full to overflowing with long repressed emotions. However, over time, there grows in me a sense that this process is no longer appropriate, and that the focus on ridding myself of negative emotion may mean that I am denying the shadow or wasting the opportunity to connect with something powerful. The voice therapists, on the other hand, use and work with the actual products of the catharsis in ways that co-counsellors do not, ways that honour the shadow and allow it to become an integrated and expressed part of the personality.

Wolfsohn was concerned with discovering a process by which it would be possible to reconnect the voice to its murkiest, most deeply buried images. ... To concern oneself only with the beautiful is to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the true nature of life, which is always a combination of dark and light. ...

... Like Jung, Wolfsohn believed that humankind once had to express the elements, the animals, feelings and experiences with sound. But Wolfsohn took this one stage further, proposing that somewhere in the depths of the psyche a sympathy with these elements remained. ...

By giving voice to the images of the psyche, Wolfsohn believed that he was converting the psychic into the somatic.

Newham 1993 pp. 90 & 92

These reflections confront me with how much I have neglected voice as a path, both for myself, and in my work. There are times when I want passionately to be able to sing, just for the joy of it, but have only made sporadic attempts to achieve this. I deeply know that Wolfohn is right about the connection with the shadow, and that this is a path I need to take to unlock more creative potential in myself, and to find a powerful way of working with others. I recognize the relevance of all this to the previous chapter's exploration of the relations between men and women, and the need to access my female power. I also know that sound and rhythm have been powerful in opening up my spirituality for the first time in many years.

It is significant that a particularly memorable experience took place at a co-counselling workshop many years ago, and was an explicit attempt to move away from the traditional way of working with catharsis. Although at the time I did not fully appreciate what the facilitator was trying to achieve, it was sufficiently powerful that I have frequently incorporated the exercise into my own work with co-counsellors. It is further significant that the exercise was known as the "Jung Four Function exercise" although this was my first experience of Jung and I had no knowledge of the theory behind it.

The exercise was based on Jung's theory of balancing the four functions of thought, emotion, sensation, and intuition. I stood in a room with many others, feet firmly grounded, knees relaxed, arms hanging loose. The instruction was to concentrate intently on the moment, and to constantly monitor what I was thinking, feeling, seeing in images, and sensing in my body. At first I felt drawn strongly earthwards as if by a long drilling tap root of fear and anger. Then the process of circling round the four functions seemed to prevent a descent into the familiar and usual (in co-counselling) cathartic expression of those emotions, and led gradually into an upward spiralling movement. This seemed to break through the negative fear into positive excitement, through the rage into a positive feeling of empowerment, and transcended them both into a sense of lightness, freedom, and pure energy that seemed like flying. My experience was of being spun up into another dimension in a movement that had something in common with the dance of the whirling dervish described by Jill Purce, and towards which this chapter is gradually winding its way. As I remember, all that was missing to make that experience whole, was sound. I was silent, and wish now that I could have soared into song as a metaphor for flight.

The illustration in Jill Purce's book "The Mystic Spiral", of the coming together of the soul of man and the universal spirit recalled the diagram of that experience that I drew at the time:

Two conical spirals are visualised, whirling in opposite directions, one going up through the body and the other coming down to meet it. ... The goal of the meditation is the union or interpenetration of these two. ... the lower vortex spirals up to meet and attract its spiritual counterpart.

Purce 1974 p.26

Other similar drawings appear in my journal alongside the “sycamore spirals” dream described in (Chapter 4) where I saw spiral messengers spinning out of a sycamore tree towards me. A comment underneath the drawings surprises me: *“can we be individual spirals upturned and go to meet them?”*. I can’t think why I asked the question, other than that it was prompted by the appearance of the spirals themselves. Whatever the reason, Purce seems to be giving the answer, “yes”.

Disruption, Chaos, and Creativity

The shift into this section feels in itself sudden and disruptive, but necessary if we are not to lose sight of the presenter on this spiral path. It would have been inappropriate to explore his body armour or his deep psychic images, but it was appropriate to help him to release his voice using cattle calling and body movement at a relatively superficial level. The techniques described in this section work at a similar surface level, but even at that level serve to shake up and enrich the commercial settings where they are used.

These techniques, many of which are being adopted and adapted by the business world in recognition of the need to free creativity, seem to be based on similar principles to those described above. I share Charlene Spretnak’s (1993) concern that *watered-down* versions of ancient traditions are *peddled* commercially to those *“who want a mental edge in grabbing all they can in this life”*. However, although some may be used in a relatively mechanistic way, my experience is that they can be used to tap creativity, and offer a deeper connection with the world to people who would otherwise not encounter such an experience. To that end they aim to short circuit the conceptual habit of judgement involved in automatically identifying and naming what we perceive, so that we again experience *“our imaginal involvement”* in the act of perception, *“an imaging process continuous with our creative depths.”* (Heron 1992).

We get a flavour of this imaging process when we wake in a strange room, and, through half closed eyes, begin to make out shapes in the half light where the shadows in between may appear more substantial than the objects that normally claim our attention. We can then actually observe the mind striving towards that naming as it wakes up and demands to make sense rather than simply experiencing the environment.

What follows is a whirlwind tour of methods that have come into my experience and which lend depth to, or a new perspective on, the emerging pattern, that is that sound and body movement help to connect psyche and soma, to integrate the whole person and release creative potential. These methods use a number of different and related strategies to disrupt the rut of habitual thought patterns. Each has one or many of the following elements.

- Lifting the constraints on imaginative flights of fancy
- Accessing unconscious-intuitive knowing
- Making links between Right and Left Brain activity
- Involving the body in the thinking process

Brainstorming

A widely known technique which encourages the uncensored imagination is brainstorming, effective in releasing the creative right brain for innovation and problem solving. The key to the first stage of brainstorming is not to censor anything that comes into consciousness. The more is admitted and expressed, the more comes. As soon as an idea is censored it serves to block the passage of any further ideas because in no time at all attention focuses on the block and creativity is killed. The aim is rather to follow associations and connections freely, using imagination and humour.

The second stage of brainstorming uses the left brain's ability to analyse the results of stage one, explaining and exploring the meaning and usefulness of contributions, and selecting and developing those that appear to have the most practical potential.

Writing – Free Fall, Glossalalia, and “Other Hand”

The practice of free fall writing to which I was recently introduced also depends upon the absence of a censoring filter. It is effective in overcoming writer's block, and in learning to write more creatively. The key rules, to keep the hand moving, and to allow every intuitive impulse onto the page, resulted successfully for me in writing about things that took me by surprise.

An exercise which takes the process of free fall a stage further, and which I find particularly uncomfortable is the practice of glossalalia. It involves writing, and especially talking, in non-sense sounds in order to escape the confines of logical sense-making, grammatical structures, and normal sentence cadences. If this is used simply as an ice-breaker, it can be at best fun, at worst irritating or even, as I found it, inhibiting rather than the reverse. However, when it was treated with a little more depth and energy, I became intrigued by it, and found listening to others a moving experience. I now see that the process was moving us toward pre-verbal expression, as strange sounds began to generate their own highly expressive rhythms and tonality, and to involve gesture and posture in the whole communication.

Other methods specifically involve body movement to stimulate right/left brain connecting, or to disrupt familiar patterns and shake us out of ruts. Lucia Capacchione (1988) suggests an exercise in which both hands are used. First, a problem or issue is described by the writer on one page of an exercise book using the dominant hand; then, on the opposite page, the other hand is used to comment on it and offer solutions. Once again I had the experience of accessing ideas and feelings that I had not been aware of having, and was strangely disturbed by the bizarre appearance of what I had written, not just by its uncoordinated and childish awkwardness, but by its spiky, aggressive energy.

Alphabet Edit

Another technique that seems designed to stimulate the interaction of the two halves of the brain comes from NLP. It is called Alphabet Edit, and I have spoken to business users who maintain that it effectively shifts blocks in their working and thinking patterns when problem-solving. This technique involves reciting the alphabet aloud while rehearsing arm and leg movements involving right and left limbs alternately. Having reached the end of the alphabet, the sequence must then be completed in reverse. Any mistake incurs the penalty of starting again from the beginning. The focus and concentration required, even when following the sequence on a board, is intense, but the rote style of the exercise is so tedious and exasperating that it is hard to find fun, and hard to imagine the benefit. By contrast Jean Houston's exercises in the "Possible Human" (see below) are not only enjoyable (either in a creative and meditative or an hilarious way) but are also given a great breadth and depth of context. A possible fashionable alternative to Alphabet Edit is juggling which is currently in vogue and which I believe also makes claims to enhance creativity and relieve stress.

Accelerated Learning

The whole field of accelerated learning bases its principles on an understanding of the chemistry of the brain, and sets out to create a suitable environment, and to involve the whole body, through movement and through the senses, in the learning process. These methods originate in the teaching of language, but have also been successfully applied to computer programming training in IBM Germany, and are being more widely explored in management development and other areas through the Society for Effective Affective Learning (SEAL). I was pleased to find that my largely intuitive methods of creating a good learning environment and providing materials to appeal to a variety of learning styles were broadly congruent with the principles developed by Colin Rose and others. However, I found their models helpful in bringing a more systematic and purposeful focus to my planning.

My only experience of these methods applied to language training was in a conference session led by a tiny and dynamic Hungarian woman called Eva Jonai whose vibrant energy I shall never forget. She had created a memorable environment with vivid and energetic posters and certainly threw her whole body into the activity with an infectious enthusiasm that swept participants past their initial embarrassment. We did repeated physical exercises while chanting words and phrases, so that our bodies were in effect doing the learning, a process that was difficult for me to evaluate because the language she was teaching was English.

Jean Houston

In the work of Jean Houston we see the full scope of the pattern I am tracing. She gives an historical and spiritual context which tracks the "*rhythm of awakening*" through the ages, works toward a systematic awakening of the body, the brain, and the senses, and provides

carefully researched and developed practical exercises. Houston deplores our current limited and conditioned "*lensing of reality*" and asks the question:

How do we open those lenses to permit entry to both the vision and the inspiration needed to launch the journey of the possible human?

Houston 1982 p. xvii

Houston's research involved work over seventeen years at the Foundation for Mind Research in New York exploring altered states of consciousness, different modes of thinking, image and dream work, and biofeedback, amongst other methods.

Houston's conclusion from her research is that therapies that neglected the body were doomed to failure, and claims:

... you cannot have a successful and permanent extension of mental, psychological, and spiritual capacity without working toward an enhancement of the physiological capacity.

Houston 1982 p. xix

Houston attributes what she terms a "*real loss of human intelligence*" to this deterioration of the body:

It is a path of physical erosion and real loss of human intelligence, this Western division of body from mind, and its consequences are being felt all over the planet. This rationalizing, objectifying mind-set is a direct outgrowth of the loss of awareness of sensorimotor functions, as is the inability to use a larger range of body-mind perceptions for more subtle understanding and complex problem-solving. Quite simply, the holocaust of body-mind has led to the ecological holocaust and to the awful inadequacy of present political and economic solutions.

Houston 1982 p. xix

Houston combines ancient and modern methods from varied cultures to develop exercises to awaken and stretch under-used faculties, "*to open the lenses and unshackle the minds*". Her multi-tracking exercises involve a constant barrage of mental and physical surprises combined with vigorous movement, sound, and the need for acute concentration. Other exercises are quiet and reflective, involving inner dialogue and equally stretching imaginal gymnastics. All aim to extend us beyond the territory of the known into an altered state of consciousness that allows us to see the infinity of potential that Houston knows is available to us.

Whether it be through dancing, drumming, chanting, fasting, or employing the many varieties of psychophysical and psychospiritual exercises, human beings have learned to travel to their edges, there to fall off the known world and bring back news from the unknown.

Houston 1982 p. xviii

Resistance to Chaos

The unknown and the possible are, however, often too disturbing and too chaotic to be contemplated, and the whole camera is shut down rather than change the lens.

I am reminded of the creativity consultant who came on a workshop with me recently in a large corporation. He seemed so outrageously different, it was as if the boy with golden hair of the fairy tale of Iron John, as told by Bly (1990) (see Chapter 11), had walked into the room and taken off his head covering, so that the gold radiated out. Quietly spoken, polite, and charming, he was nevertheless disruptive of every established order, questioning, playful, funny, innovative, and finally immensely productive of creative and constructive ideas which could be applied in practical ways to solve the problems we were there to address. By contrast with this man's unusual presence the normality of the corporate environment showed up as sterile, constraining, and fraught with the undercurrents of hidden agendas. Unfortunately, the representative of that culture, who had invited us all there with the express agenda of being innovative, could not tolerate the fact that innovation was moving us all out of the framework she had envisaged and prescribed. We had strayed out of the range of her controlling lens and were called humourlessly to heel.

Having vision and faith that constructive results can eventually emerge from apparent chaos is part of getting to know the unknown ground of potential. Only through taking risks and experiencing the process can we learn to trust it. The role of the facilitator of such a process is difficult, for she needs to maintain her own faith in the process, while reassuring or reminding the group that the process has a point and is worth enduring, and at the same time managing, and helping others to manage the often stormy emotions that such uncertainty produces.

Patriarchy has constructed elaborate defences against this chaos (Spretnak 1993) which is associated with untamed Nature and with women. Anything that is perceived to threaten these defences, even at a superficial level, is likely to stir feelings at a much deeper level.

In the Knowledge Engineering course I used to teach, students engaged in qualitative data analysis during the case study, and this nearly always engendered panic and anger, partly at the overwhelming volume and diversity of the data, and partly at the intuitive way we were asking them to handle it. Significantly it was most often the women emulating men to compete in a man's world, and more "male" than the men, who were most resistant (see the DDs, Chapter 11). Often it was all we could do to encourage them to stay with the mess long enough to reap the rewards and understand the value of the exercise. Sometimes the admission of the value of that learning didn't come until months afterwards when an experience in the field finally brought the message home to a resistant student.

Making a Song and Dance

All the approaches described in this chapter seem to be drawn together by the way they move away from the languid, the laid-back, and the cool or frozen which is reluctant to get involved, reluctant to risk commitment, and reluctant to risk experimenting with the potentially ridiculous, embarrassing, or emotionally charged. They engage the child and the fool in us with a passionate and naive intensity, taking us on a quest to discover and stretch our potential and release the wisdom locked up in our bodies. At an organization level they bring a transformational energy to bear on rigidity that is resistant to change and seek to harness people power into growing the organization. At a spiritual level we are looking for a route back to our "*capacity for orgy*" and "*life-loving frenzy*" (Long 1992).

"Making a song and dance" is the very antithesis of becoming paralysed, and it gives permission for others to take up the refrain. It declares the importance of an issue, draws attention to it, with energy, insistence, and yet with a lightness of touch. Someone once described me as a "big woman being messy all over the place". I was slow to see the compliment in this, but accepted the explanation that I was effectively making a song and dance about unspoken agendas, saying the unsayable, asking deliberately naive questions to challenge assumptions, and inviting others to engage with these issues. The description sounds clumsy, however, and I would like to think I had more lightness of touch than it suggests. Maintaining energy, but not allowing it to be overwhelming, bruising, or threatening is a key skill: a matter of knowing when to lead and when to listen; a matter of timing and rhythm, of making it a dance.

It often may take someone being messy to make an impact on an organization; messy in the sense of being conspicuously different, stepping over boundaries as if they were not there, being or acting unaware of what is "not possible"; and reflecting a different way of seeing the world. To return to our presenter, it was not just his own panic which was straitjacketing him, but also the very strong prevailing norms that governed the giving of presentations in his organization. Giving a presentation was synonymous with showing overhead projector slides, these slides consisting almost universally of bulleted lists of printed words in black and white. My only use of the overhead projector was to show six slides which showed pictorially all that I deplored about the organization's insistence on the use of overhead projectors. My main contention was that the universal worship of the overhead projector meant that presenters became extensions of, and slaves to, the machine, which conveniently allowed them to forget the audience. What started as a useful and essentially *flexible* tool had virtually become an end in itself in a way that demonstrated considerable rigidity.

So how do we maintain the energy to avoid such stultification? Other trainers in dialogue with me have talked of the need for certain sorts of energy, thus G talked of the dynamo model:

G: ... I thought group dynamics, what is that? The word dynamics comes from a dynamo, and a dynamo is about turning one sort of energy into another sort of energy, like pedal power into push-bike lights. And whatever energies go into the group, they come out as different types of energy, in different ways. It's one thing to see and experience the energy that's coming out, but it's also important to work with the type of energy that's going in. Symptoms and causes.

Taped conversation 3rd May 1989

and A found a metaphor while watching some rabbits:

A: When I was up at Sparsholt, ... there were two rabbits over in amongst the trees. ... it's come back very vividly. These two rabbits, bouncing around in amongst all the grass and the trees, chasing each other. ... with little white tails going, and there was ever such a lot of energy in that. And it just reminded me, it's a bit like that, that the energy's out there. It's a happy kind of energy.

Jill: ... And ... when they hear something, and they all rush back into the burrow.

A: Strange. Those two images – of them bouncing, you know how they bounce, they literally bounce, full of fun with their ears up, and then as you say they get the foot thump and they're away down the hole again.

Jill: Yes.... That's an image I use – I've gone down a hole, fallen down a hole.

A: ... I'm just thinking what it's like to give yourself an instruction almost to stay out there. What you're experiencing isn't real – it's a way of defending yourself. It's a way of defending yourself that's gone into operation – it's an old learned response. Get back in your burrow, if you stay out there you'll get hurt. That's old; stuff that's not real. You can stay out there even though it feels scary, but I don't know whether I can do that.

Taped conversation 25th April 1989

A is seeking to get away from the protective shell, the carapace which acts like a straitjacket and a barrier, creating the plastic personality, and protecting us at the expense of our effectiveness and humanity. Similarly Sue talked of finding it hard to resist “snapping into the committee person” because she knew she could operate, collude and do the business that way, at the expense of remaining human. Much more difficult is the task of remaining vulnerable without allowing the wounded child in each of us to get more hurt and sabotage our good intentions.

What is the alternative to putting on defensive armour or being busy? The answer seems to be to do with staying still long enough to notice the message from the environment, standing in the stillness at the centre of the spiral, in the silence between the words. This is a different stillness from the frozen paralysis of the presenter who dries up. It is open, receptive, relaxed, and ready to tune in to what is out there. Berman (1990 p.316) talks of “the gesture

of balance" which seems to correspond to Heron's description of suspending the act of judgement and recapturing our connection with the world:

episodes of relative awareness – as in moments of interpersonal and group communion, contemplation of art and nature, peak experiences, creativity and free expression.

Heron 1992 p.77

Berman describes this as a coming together of self and other or self and the universe where judgement and separation are temporarily suspended: "a simple look of understanding between yourself and a stranger", a friendly gesture between strangers allows them to share their common humanity, just as A participates, momentarily, in the energy of the rabbits.

As a facilitator I have learned that suspending judgement and refraining from acting at critical points in the group life can be invaluable. If I am still and give myself time to consult what my body knows of the situation, it will tell me in sensations and images, and offer a more intelligent way forward than I could have found with my anxious mind. This is more fully explored in Chapter 5.

The next step is to take energy from that insight to allow us, in A's words, to stay out there. This is the risk. It is resisting the temptation to run back down the burrow, to assume the committee persona, to hide behind defensive sarcasm, or a barrage of words, but to step out without the protective shell.

... it requires doing the one thing that we seek to avoid at all costs: we are asked finally to put our entire bodies into a situation; to refuse numbness and protection in favour of risk and immediacy.

Berman 1990 p.318

I believe that what Berman is describing here lies at the very heart of the role of the facilitator who is trying to make a difference. That is the whole point. It is, in the words of Laing, "*the obstinate attempt ... to recover the wholeness of being human*" which is critical to healing, whether it be of individuals, organisations, or the planet. But we do not go out there in a state of raw or passive vulnerability that invites abuse of our openness. This is not a sacrifice, but an active giving of energy, an offer of sharing, a challenge, not to a contest but to a collaboration, an invitation to play. As A said of the rabbits, "*it's a happy kind of energy*".

We need the ability to laugh, and yet to hold gravity within that laughter; to be open and also be prepared to fence a little; to dance and hold our ground; to allow chaos while maintaining focus; to spin with a still centre.

Dancing the circle, spinning the spiral

Mary Daly writes of women who spin (spinsters) spinning their way past the resistance and the traps or “baffles” of patriarchy. (And what is the overhead projector described above if not a baffle of patriarchy?) She explores the derivation of the word “spin” in depth. For example:

Spinning implies spontaneous movement, the free creativity that springs from integrity of be-ing. ... dis-covering the lost thread of connectedness within the cosmos, repairing this web as we create. ... Spinsters whirl and twirl the threads of life on the axis of our own be-ing. This be-ing is itself the spindle, the thread, the whirl. ... Turning quickly on our heels, facing many other directions, we spin away from the death march. As whirling dervishes we move backward, sideward, forward, upward, downward, outward, inward – transforming our time/space.

Daly 1991 p. 389-90

Baring and Cashford (1993) compare the web metaphors used by modern science with images of spinners in goddess worship and legend, which survives into Christianity in “pictures of the Virgin Mary with the thread of human destiny spinning from her womb”. Daly too writes of an archetypal spinster, the spider spinning its thread from within its body, weaving a web, a spiral net converging to a central point.

I experience a high degree of conflict in reading Daly. On the one hand, *what* she says draws me, she provides links and connections that I seek, and I delight in the new perspectives that she gives by rattling and shaking the structure and derivations of words; on the other hand, I believe her abrasive style and uncompromising hostility towards patriarchy must antagonise many men whether or not they are implicated, and can only prolong division. It is difficult to trust that the process can be healing or creative enough for “*repairing this web*” in the context of such a war-like message. But on yet another hand I find her totally uncompromising answer to this anticipated criticism gloriously powerful. Her book, which she describes as “*Furiously and Finally Female*” focuses unequivocally on the freeing of women from the rapist behaviour of men.

Matthew Fox (1990) takes a gentler approach to the same dilemma in his exploration of “Dancing Sarah’s circle” as opposed to “climbing Jacob’s ladder”. Fox claims that taking the ladder from Jacob’s dream as a symbol of spiritual progress up to God and away from the earth, has resulted in western worship becoming “*worshup*”. This is very similar to the view of the Bishop of Woolwich (Robinson 1963) writing in the sixties and using depth metaphors to ground religion. Fox, however, is saying something more, which links the upward movement with the movement away from the worship of the feminine principle and the goddess.

Perfection is upward. There can be no question that this drive upwards in the name of spirituality is a drive away from body, earth, matter, mother, the sensual.

Fox 1990 p.41

By contrast the story of Sarah conceiving a child focuses on human emotions of joy and surprise. Sarah is a “symbol of laughter and creativity”.

This already sharply distinguishes her symbol from that of male interpretations of Jacob's dream, since as you may have observed, there is little laughter and joy among those who climb ladders. Ladder-climbing is ever so serious. Ego's are so much involved.

Fox 1990 p.44

A comparable sense of joy comes through in Charlene Spretnak's description of goddess spirituality ritual.

We have immersed ourselves in the erotic realm of myth, symbol, poetry, song, dance, and ritual ... in order to come to our senses. Having been educated within the patriarchal framework ... we hungered to feed our capabilities of perceiving subtle, encompassing, scrumptious connectedness ... Boxed in by cultural denial, we dissolved the boxes by forming a circle, an ever-widening circle ...

Spretnak 1993 p. 149

The same Presentation Skills course already referred to brought an example of how blinkered and tyrannical monotheistic religion can be. A colleague who was also a yoga teacher assisted me in running one of the courses. I asked her to introduce the short session on breathing and voice projection with some deep breathing exercises. Rashly she referred to the breath by the Sanskrit word “prana”. This innocent word apparently offended a Born Again Christian in the group who complained after the course to the organization. I was subsequently asked not to introduce religious content into the course: two “ladder” systems combined forces as a sledge hammer to crack an imaginary nut.

On a week-long team-building event that I co-facilitated more fully described in Chapter 12, the ladder-climbing metaphor was brought graphically to life during some outdoor sessions on ropes among trees. One of the key elements on the course was the physical challenge involved. I have long resisted physical activity as a method of growth, because I had more than enough at school where it meant physical pain and mental humiliation. This experience however, shows me how the body can get the mind moving, how physical challenge can loosen the emotions, and how physical activity can ground experience.

The outdoor work also gave us the opportunity to draw out parallels and metaphors which emerged in the woods as mirrors of problematic issues for the team at work and in their personal lives. I believe that the raising of the physical energy in the woods which enabled

so many people to meet and exceed their personal physical challenges, generated an equivalent emotional or spiritual energy for interpersonal work back at the hotel. For some, this appeared to have an upward spiralling effect throughout the week, with an activity in one arena having an energising effect on activity in other arenas.

Fox emphasizes the compassion and inclusive sharing of the circle dance and the circle metaphor, as against the competitive elitism of the ladder game of survival of the fittest. He contrasts the characteristics of Jacob's ladder and Sarah's circle respectively in a table which recalls a similar chart I made concerning management styles in the organisation referred to above, several years before the team-building event described:

On the "ladder" side both charts paint a now familiar picture of task-oriented managers keeping a defensive distance from their staff, holding all cards close to their chest because information is power, and prescribing both objectives, tasks and methods without consultation in a formal authoritarian way. Recently I listened to a new managing director describing the behaviour of his predecessor and senior managers in these terms as he sought help in initiating changes. More often I hear about the consequences of such a style from those who are oppressed by it. What amazes me repeatedly is how long it takes for many committed and conscientious workers who are largely ignored and undervalued to succumb to the suspicious, cynical and clock-watching behaviour that this treatment invites. But rumour and the need to protect self-interest tend to undermine working relationships and lead to competition and manipulative manoeuvring.

The alternative "circle" behaviour is an interactive, consultative style that seeks to develop liberating structures (Torbert 1991) to involve people in being self-directing. Managers aim to communicate openly, share information, and negotiate in peer teams, making themselves available as people, rather than acting solely in role. This is more a way of being than a management style, and when practised authentically and consistently, allows trust and co-operation to develop. People who feel valued, engaged on projects they shape and direct themselves, are prepared to commit time and energy.

What led to the construction of my "ladder/circle" table was the dilemma for students of my personal development courses that is central to this thesis. In these courses I was presenting students with an alternative "circle" set of behaviours and way of being in the organization, and offering them the opportunity to be open and honest with one another in discussing issues that concerned them. They found the experience exhilarating, embraced the values underlying the skills and techniques they learned, and were eager to put them into practice back in their departments. A few were fortunate in having managers and colleagues who responded positively; others found themselves punished in some way for their more open behaviour, and it, or they, became extinguished by the prevailing culture.

At first my concern about this centred around the fact that I appeared to be making life more difficult for students, rather than improving things. I had to remind myself that it was their choice, and that I had never said that it would be easy. Eventually I had to admit that my hidden agenda (hidden both from them and, partially, from me) was that I, and therefore indirectly they, should “make a difference” where a difference needed to be made. Since this realisation I have been explicit not only about the difficulties of transferring learning, but also about the resistance that may be encountered, how to anticipate and manage it to some extent, both in the context of work and personal partnerships. I have also been careful to announce my availability to anyone having difficulties in the period following the course, either in the work setting or in managing unforeseen inner turmoil.

A second concern has now emerged during the writing of this thesis which relates to the nature of the resistance that these students are likely to encounter, both in others and as they come to terms with the implications of their new behaviour, in themselves. It relates to the gap referred to by Newham and explored by Berman (see chapter 9). These explorations suggest that the setback experienced by students may be the result of a resistance so deep-seated that they are not likely either to succeed, or to comprehend the enormity of the task they are setting themselves. Furthermore they are themselves more vulnerable than they know because the split between their new perception of the possible and the ingrained habits of the organisation may seem to echo the deep split in themselves which took place (see Newham) when self-expression became alienated from the body by the use of abstract words. For what they are trying to achieve is essentially a move towards that state, towards greater integrity and congruence, although it may be a long way off the dramatic performance of primitive communication. All of which contributes to a greater sense of failure. They think they have failed at a relatively small task, the scale of which I have only just realised myself. And if I were to attempt to tell or warn the next generation of pioneers, I would probably not make myself understood, and if I did I might deter some who might be successful.

Today there are signs that the organisation referred to earlier is attempting to move towards the co-operative shape of Sarah's circle, for instance, with a change from the ladder-like structure of the former appraisal system in favour of *managing contributions* in the context of flatter and more flexible teams. Attitudes change slowly, however, and there is still far to go before the energy of movement and growth described by Fox in the circle metaphor will be fully available.

How important it is that Sarah's circle be an open one and not a closed one. The closed circle suggests a return to the womb ... flight from the world. An open circle ... seeks to make contact with the energies of our origins but it is not content to stay there. It moves on into greater and greater circular or spiral energies.

Fox 1990 p.51

A recent set of personal experiences at an important turning point in my life brought me back to the significance of spirals and dancing, sound and vibration, with new interest and energy.

The experience was in three stages. The first involved the reversal of a severe and painful shutting down of vital energy that took place in my early twenties in response to the loss of a relationship. A recent development in my fiftieth year (when this man, who is now my husband, re-appeared in my life) seemed to rip the lid off this half-forgotten and long-discounted shutdown, and I experienced profound physiological disturbance. It extended over weeks, producing earthquake-like disruptions in stomach and abdomen, loss of appetite, and a sense of disorientation. This gave me powerful, personal, physical evidence that the memory of the loss in my twenties had been carried in my body, in my very intestines for over a quarter of a century.

The second stage followed a few weeks later, lasted about half an hour, and involved dancing and singing to music in a way that I had never before experienced, being at one with the sound and the movement, almost in a trance, feeling out of control and yet in charge, celebratory, free and flying.

The third stage saw the onset of fire spirals which grew from the source of the physical disruption and glowed outward and upward through my body.

The experience was of glowing heat pulsating gently and steadily from the very root centre of me, radiating out and out like concentric circles of fire starting in my centre and moving out beyond it to my aura, breaking through the skin in a sweat. It felt like strong positive energy, and my first thought was that maybe this was healing energy beginning to manifest.

Journal 3rd March 1994

This seemed to me a surge of Shakti energy which extended over the very weeks of March when in previous years my body has followed a pattern of being in a cold, low and debilitated physical state.

These latest experiences and the powerful energy that has followed, confirm my belief that spirals were indeed sending me important messages. This in turn led me to investigate spirals further, which in turn led me to Jill Purce's book "The Mystic Spiral" which I had bought at the workshop where, through chanting, I discovered my young jill-girl self. It was then that I first made the connection with shamanic dancing, drumming and the raising of healing heat and energy by these means. Purce describes the dance of the Dervish:

He spins gradually faster, as if by his own revolutions he were connecting Heaven and earth by actually turning the spirit through himself and down into the ground, while his axis and heart remain absolutely still and his own spirit soars to its Divine Source.

Purce 1974 p.30

She also comments on our culture's relationship to dance and its possibilities for us:

By dancing and emulating the macrocosmic creative dance of Siva, the whirling of the planets, or the dance of atoms, man actively incorporates the creative vibrations and ordering movements of the cosmos. His body becomes the universe, his movements its movements, and when these are harmonious, then he is not only in harmony with himself, but with the universe which he has become.

... Certainly we have forgotten the depths of meaning behind the dance. Yet in spite of this, it is perhaps through the physical movement of our whole bodies that the spiral path may be most real to us. Every time we 'turn' or circle, in the movement for example of Scottish dancing, we are activating the inner energies and their cosmic counterparts.

Purce 1974 p.30 & 31

Suddenly I recognised that many experiences, which had previously appeared to be isolated incidents of a purely personal nature, were coherent parts of a pattern, stepping stones on a path to understanding, realising, and valuing my own power. Here seemed the key to stepping out of the victim mode of ever-decreasing circles, into the empowerment of the expanding spiral. The experience of Frankie's workshop, of the Jung exercise, of the Jill Purce workshop, of finding my body-knowing in the gaps between concepts, of dancing round the fogou, and many other stories of insight: if all of these are linked together in a dance I can keep the thread of energy unbroken as it chains inward into the self and outward into the world. I can spin past the old paralysis, through the gaps between the words, through the crack between the worlds, into a still centre of knowing. For all of these insights need connection in order to have meaning and become powerful. In isolation they are powerless. And to have connection they need a context, in the phrase of Bateson, *a pattern that connects*.

I offer you the notion of context, of pattern through time.

... And "context" is linked to another undefined notion called "meaning". Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all.

Bateson 1980 p. 14 & 15

The context here is the spiral dance, and the spiral song, or repetitive chant, whose rhythms and vibrations have been able to open a channel of energy which connects body and mind, earth and body, imagination and action, and has shown me flashes of the pattern, insights, and sensations of the wholeness of being human.

It is a paradox that the spinning movement contains stillness, that movement and dance increase groundedness and connection with earth, and that the things which appear most solid to us, the earth and the rocks, are not as static as they seem. It seems appropriate at

this point to take another turn on the spiral and revisit the reference to quantum physics made at the beginning of this chapter:

Quantum theory has thus demolished the classical concepts of solid objects and of strictly deterministic laws of nature. At the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities, ... Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. ... As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks', but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole.

Capra 1983 p.78

In the *Tao of Physics* Capra expresses the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism, in ways which have relevance for the journey of this chapter:

[Ford] is not the only physicist to have used phrases like 'dance of creation and destruction' and 'energy dance'. The ideas of rhythm and dance naturally come into mind when one tries to imagine the flow of energy going through the patterns that make up the particle world. Modern physics has shown us that movement and rhythm are essential properties of matter; that all matter, whether here on Earth or in outer space, is involved in a continual cosmic dance.

The Eastern mystics have a dynamic view of the universe similar to that of modern physics, and ... have used the image of the dance to convey their intuition of nature.

Capra 1983 p.269

This final passage from Capra also comes from the *Tao of Physics*, although I first encountered it reproduced in *Uncommon Wisdom*, a book I value for the way Capra connects people who have made important impressions on me, such as Stan Grof, Ronnie Laing, Gregory Bateson, and more recently Charlene Spretnak. I therefore take that source as the context for this extract:

I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sand, rocks, water, and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms, and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another ... All this was familiar to me from my research in high-energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams, ... theories. As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I 'saw' cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I knew that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.

Capra 1989 p.33

So What?

This concluding chapter attempts to understand the research experience, both at the micro level summarized into six personal "learnings" or messages; and at the macro level of the wider context of making a difference in the world. I consider the regenerative power of alchemy, and the need to make space for the sacred.

My fear has been that the answer to the title of this chapter will turn out to be: "*so what indeed!*" I am not sure whether I am asking "*so what are the answers, the findings, the outcomes?*" Or "*what is the recipe for success?*" Or "*so what next?*" What are the questions? What do I wish I had done? Have I made a difference?

For in some ways, as I draw this work to a close with some excitement, relief, and apprehension, I feel that only now am I ready to begin. "*What next?*" will become an important question very soon.

Yes, there are outcomes but no authoritative answers. When I first saw John Heron's *Facilitator's Handbook* I was both excited by it and disappointed that someone else had got there first and done it so much better than I could. For it contained the sort of answers I expected to have by now. Yet I am surprised to find I have hardly drawn on it. It is a fascinating, thorough, and useful book, but my journey has taken me in a different direction.

I only really have one answer, and that is that I am amazed. It has been an awesome experience. I have seen a new world. I have discovered mystery and connection on such a scale and on so many levels, both macro and micro, and coming so fast that I have been breathless and dizzy. I have learnt, and grown, in unforeseeable ways, and have been engaged in a process that will continue in one form or another for the rest of my life. Out of that learning has come, not a recipe for success, but a more connected understanding of the world, and a re-awakening of participative consciousness which is continuing to strengthen.

A cyclical process of learning has taken place: I started out with some intuitive and largely tacit principles of effective facilitation, which became explicit through examining my own process and discussing with others. At this stage I was looking to discover the *How* of my trade. The inquiry actually revealed the *What*, the nature of the facilitation process which has affected me at many more levels than the merely professional. The *What* turned out to be about making whole: both within myself; within students; between me and students and co-workers in the dynamics of a group; between that group and the organization; between organizations and the planet. At some semi-conscious level I knew this from the start. Hence the purpose of making a difference, and the images of ripples in a pond; but the

knowing has become conscious, and in turn validates my early tacit principles which I hear, echoed back to me like messages (see below), from numerous other sources. It gives me a more rooted understanding that feeds the courage of my convictions.

The original question of the research stays with me, but it has metamorphosed. The problem as I would now express it is to stay in touch with my participating self whilst making and maintaining contact with others; especially when those others are seen to espouse, or are seen to be, (however unwittingly), a part of the paradigm that has conspired historically, and continues to conspire, to separate me, as an individual, as a citizen of the world, and an inhabitant of this planet, from that participatory and connected knowing which is the common ground of our humanity.

The “Messages”

The messages are simple and appear as prominent threads in the foregoing chapters:

Everything is connected

The pattern that connects has been very much in evidence throughout this inquiry, at both a micro and a macro level: in the synchronicities of my own life; in the dawning recognition of the connection between women's power and the Earth; in the repetition of patterns throughout my life; in the renewed sense of the sacred through personal myth, ritual, and goddess spirituality; in realising that the ripples do indeed spread from my facilitation work, out through organizations, and into the universe; in the occasional moments of comprehending the cosmic dance; and in the process metaphors of webs, mosaics, and weaving that have emerged.

Baring and Cashford (1993) describe Owen Barfield's (1989) distinction between original and final participation:

Original participation is ... the relation to nature of the old goddess myth, in which humanity and the natural world are bound with a common identity. Final participation, on the other hand, ... re-creates through the 'systematic use of imagination' the old participative relation to nature but in an entirely new way. ... in which our contemporary experience of nature as separate from us is honoured but transformed by a conscious act of participation in which our identity with nature is experienced at a new level of unity. This, in the language of mythology, is again the sacred marriage of god and goddess.

Baring and Cashford 1993 p.676

I have begun to explore ritual as one method of conscious participation that opens up the pathway of connection and keeps it trodden.

Listen to body knowledge

One of the biggest breakthroughs in the inquiry, and in my facilitation process came with the recognition that my body is wise. I still have a long way to go in respecting its wisdom: that is, in remembering to listen to it, taking notice and acting on its information, and in taking care of it, both by giving it exercise and freeing it from my addictions. In spite of being repeatedly thrown out of balance by my neglect, abuse, and failure to love it enough, it remains loyal. Its state reflects the world it finds itself in, that is, I am putting my body in the victim position.

The body and the natural world are deeply connected: our body is that piece of wilderness that we carry around with us all the time, a living ecology which provides a home to many creatures and life events, which may be in balance or out of balance.

Reason 1994 p. 13

At a head level I can arrive at a belief that if I were to clean up my addictive act and practise personal ecology, that could have a ripple effect in the opposite direction on the environmental ecology. So far scepticism, laziness, fear, and self-indulgence conspire to prevent me accepting this at a gut level, or transferring it consistently into action. The paradox is that it would feel like deprivation for *me*, that is, I still see myself as separate from my body, in spite of my belief that everything is connected. I have a long way to go before playing my part in this vision described by Adrienne Rich:

The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of the means of production by workers. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. In such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth ... the visions, and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence — a new relationship to the universe. Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community, intimacy will develop new meanings; thinking itself will be transformed.

This is where we have to begin.

Rich 1977 p. 285

Stay open and vulnerable

It is a paradox central to my way of working that my power (power-within) is founded on my capacity to maintain openness and vulnerability in interacting with others. This position is neither defensive-aggressive which would invite attack; nor is it declaring weakness and issuing a similar invitation to attack. It *works with* vulnerability from a position of strength, combining the two, and not only fuels my power but allows me to give permission to others to be open and to support them in that.

Metacommunicate

In his double bind theory Bateson (1972) identifies as a key ingredient of the double bind relationship, the inability of the victim to leave the situation. I have noticed that, in facilitating groups, where members perceive themselves as victims of their situation, or where an impasse in group process occurs, the essential first step in leaving the "victim" or "stuck" position is to leave the frame that defines them or us as powerless. It is then possible to take power by commenting on the process of what is happening rather than getting caught in the conflict.

The metaphor of stepping out of the frame appears to imply more separation, whereas one message of this thesis is that the way to healing our alienation is through conscious acts of participation and connection. Paradoxically, however, this distancing of perspective allows us to see the whole picture, the wood beyond the trees. Further, it is important to be clear that the frame we are stepping out of not only keeps us too close to the trees, but also imposes a world view of divisions, fragmentation and inevitable contradictions and conflict. We are stepping out into a more holistic view. There comes a point, however, when we can no longer step outside of the frame because there are no divisions. Continuing to step out becomes addictive behaviour at this point, and we start to create divisions by separating ourselves from the unity we have discovered. To quote a former member of the Bath Research Group:

... because we as human beings are connected in a unified way to the rest of nature we are never going to be able to step outside the pattern in a detached way, even though we think we can. This is our faulty epistemology, according to Bateson, which is the major cause of the profound threats to the entire biosphere.

Parrott 1990 p. 26

The paradox of this message is that the ultimate metacommunication is silence.

In the end I come up against a mystery or Mystery that is not describable.

Parrott 1990 p. 166

This message links closely with the next two.

Imagination is the key

Similarly when bridging between two paradigms, I need to find a position outside both of them from which to gain a perspective. I look for an analogy that will have meaning in both paradigms. Clarke identifies dreams as having special mediating power which I believe also

applies to the use of all sorts of imagery and metaphor from the special vantage point of Heron's Imaginal mode.

In the dreamworld we pass beyond the reach of social control. Which is why the dream is the last citadel of the free spirit. It's the Archimedean Point — the place outside the world from which the world itself can be moved ... if we dare to take it seriously enough.

Clarke 1990 p154

The Imaginal mode is the transitional place that links, on the one hand, the Affective mode of feeling, body knowing, and participation with the natural world, and on the other the logical, analytical thinking of the Conceptual mode. Presentational language can make the transfer across that divide as I demonstrated in my own process in Chapter 5. Thus, the use of metaphor, tapped into at the imaginal level can be a powerful way of making a metacomment. Baring and Cashford (1993) warn against the dangerous tendency of "normal" language to use opposing terms:

The danger is that, distanced from the unruly nature of actual experience, we tend to structure our thoughts in terms of definitions, and so limit our perceptions to match the limitations of language. Only poetic language with its paradoxical imagery, its resonant symbols, the play of tone, sound, texture and rhythm, can claim to be as flexible as and responsive to ambiguity and ambivalence as human experience, but the language of everyday speech is too functional, too fast, too adapted to the needs of action

Baring and Cashford 1993 p. 675

And ... and

Having gained the perspective required for such a communication, it is possible to see that two things which seemed to be in conflict are two aspects of a larger whole. Reaching that "and... and" perspective is not easy when we have been taught to separate rather than to connect. For example, it might well have been difficult for archaeologists to see that Neolithic societies were egalitarian because their mindset said either men were in power over women, or women must have been in power over men (Eisler 1990). On a smaller scale a woman on the Returning to Work course recently found it impossible to take part in an exercise where she would learn to give critical feedback to another course member. It reduced her to tears because her paradigm said that *either* I am your enemy and am critical of you, *or* I am your friend in which case I do not criticize you. The idea that constructive criticism could be given and received in friendship was quite alien to her.

The "and .. and" message is a vital one for future relationships between women and men. My concern in writing this last chapter has been that it emphasizes too strongly the need for women to connect with their power as a healing force in the universe, with the possible

implication, not intended, but easily taken, that we are not inviting men to the party. That is furthest from my hope which is for a gylanic society of partnership between women and men. However, as Eisler herself points out, that is a particularly problematic “and ... and” to achieve:

... the first policy priority in a male-dominated system has to be the preservation of male dominance.

Hence, policies that would weaken male dominance — and most policies that offer any hope for the future will — cannot be implemented.

Eisler 1990 p. 179 emphasis in the original

The “and ... and” theme is particularly important to a concern I have in this conclusion. At the beginning of this inquiry I denied that gender was important in my research. Now that my feminist awareness has been raised, but not matured, I fear becoming unbalanced in the other direction, and do not yet have my “answers” worked out here. The theme is also relevant to the alchemical theme below, both at a personal and more universal level. It is no coincidence, I am sure, that I have recently married a man who, for an important part of his life, is an active member of a patriarchal hierarchy, *and* who shares my sense of the sacredness of nature, *and* is a poet, *and* wrote the ritual for our wedding ceremony, a rite of conscious participation that took place early one morning at an ancient site. Where those differences meet we share what I believe is a genuinely creative tension within a context of ideas, values and understandings held in common.

The Wider Context

Having separated out the major threads of the pattern I will now return to the intuitive dimension to see what it makes of the pattern as a whole. This is the understanding it presented me with in the sleepless hours of the night before I started writing this chapter. It returned me to the image of the dragon hidden under the mountain in the visualization recorded in Chapter 6. On that occasion the old dragon gave birth to a young fiery dragon that curled up in my bleeding stomach, and which I took to represent my research. In the night it seemed to me that this image had expanded to become a metaphor for the rebirth of the ancient power of women.

Numerous writers already referred to have documented the resilience of this power to go underground, metamorphose, and survive oppression. It has the indestructible quality of the dragon, scaly, able to fly or swim or walk on the earth; able to breathe fire and air; able to hibernate for long periods deep in the earth like a sleeping volcano waiting to erupt with shakti energy, the *life-loving frenzy* Long invokes (Long 1992).

This is the power that I need in order to pursue my goal of making a difference, and the power that is needed to make a difference to the planet. It is also a power that can be threatening to men (Spretnak 1993, Bleakley 1984). Men need to reconnect with their own power: not their patriarchal dragon-slaying power, but inner power. Many men are doing this and rediscovering their own mysteries in meaningful ritual and connection with other men. Then, rather than competing, there is a real potential for women and men to engage in *"healing and creative interchange"* (Bleakley 1984). As a prerequisite for such partnership, Long calls for men to stand at *"the bar of history"* (Long 1992) and demonstrate that they have heard and understood *"the reality of women's hurt"*. How does she reconcile her claim that they are not to stand accused with the fact that women will hold them *"responsible for the abuses of the past and the present"*? There is a need here to distinguish between patriarchy and men. For with individual men such communication is possible. I witnessed such exchanges, for instance in the group of yoga teachers (see Chapter 14). In that small and carefully structured group we were successful. How do we replicate that on a big enough scale to make a difference without risking the escalation of misunderstanding? Is it enough that women and men each take responsibility to engage with these issues, sensitively at an individual one-to-one level, in our personal relationships? At this stage I see no other answer.

The fire that keeps my woman power alive is an intermittent but constant thread throughout the thesis, sometimes flickering, sometimes in bolder tongues, a recurring image in dreams and at an embodied or feeling level. It is an expression of deep feeling and participative energy, a counterpoint to the watery, oceanic images which have a similarly deep source. The fire is the yang that balances the watery flow of the yin and prevents it from freezing into paralysis; that makes water fizz with passion; while water simultaneously cools fire and protects the earth from its scorching power. This energy therefore, does not just consist of "frenzy" or exuberance, although this may be the most difficult part to access (due to culturally imposed inhibitions). It also consists of gentleness. The combination of the two is what I have experienced in rituals of goddess spirituality. Because this power is of women and of Nature it is also cyclical, having periods of rest and hibernation, and periods of intense activity. Above all it is a regenerative power.

Management of the feelings that give birth to such power in both women and men is a very different matter from the emotional competence described in Chapter 12. Catharsis is no longer appropriate here, for the energy is *in* the feelings rather than behind or beneath them. Catharsis is entirely appropriate to free someone of distress which stems from their own old wounds; and it is effective in burning off emotions that come from everyday frustrations, responses to the *emotional tone of the hour* (Heron 1992). I will use a topical example to illustrate this distinction. A new "syndrome" has recently been identified and given the label

“road rage”, to refer to the verbal and physical violence used by some motorists to other road users who get in their way. Road rage anger is volatile and destructive, either of self if it were contained (which by definition it is not), or of others when released. Although I fumed with correspondingly volatile irritation at the thought of road rage clinics, I nevertheless concede the value in burning this sort of rage off, and in uncovering what deeper seated stress or malaise may lie beneath it.

Compare this with a feeling I will call outrage experienced by many inhabitants of this planet at the violence being wreaked on the earth by short-sighted people for short term gain, as for example, in the rain forests of South America. This is a quite different feeling (as opposed to emotion). I don't want to cathart it away, even if that were possible, because it has the potential to become pure transformative energy. It comes from the depths like the fire in the bowels of the earth, a furnace of energy that can fuel passion long term on a slow release system. For that to happen it must be recognized for what it is, welcomed, befriended even. Adjusting the pressure is no easy matter, for this is chaotic energy, and feels as if it too could destroy if ignored or mishandled. In addition, confusion can arise because outrage can be accompanied by the volatile sort of rage. How do I tell the difference and avoid deceiving myself? And how do I set about managing that sort of powerful energy?

On the “Eisler day” (see Chapter 5) I experienced participative pain which expressed itself in tears, and which I have shared at other times with other women in goddess spirituality groups. Sometimes we also experience outrage, and I have the feeling that the two are important to one another, just as fire and water have been complementary energies in my research. The outrage can be tempered with the tears that flood up from underground rivers when the membrane of an androcratic perception of the world is peeled away.

Alchemy

At this point we have moved beyond the intra-personal need for emotional competence, or the need for inter-personal competence (we do not by-pass or leave these behind, but bring them along as working tools), and onto a transpersonal level; beyond the chemistry of individuals to archetypal feeling. What is needed to hone these feelings is an alchemical process of transformation.

Alchemists are commonly associated with the unsuccessful attempt to turn base metal into gold. Their less materialistic colleagues were more profitably engaged in a quest for the meaning of life involving a rich world of symbolism, imagery, and mythical associations, “a discipline involving physical, psychological and spiritual work” (Gilchrist 1991). Alan Bleakley describes alchemy as a “depth psychology”,

deepening ego consciousness to the interior realms of the body, to discover the body from within — a more feminine way of knowing.

Bleakley 1984 p29

Lindsay Clarke calls alchemy *"the effort to heal the split in consciousness"*. He describes the search of the alchemist as an attempt to redeem the world from materialism and regenerate it through a *"transcendent change"*.

One that reconciles matter with spirit, heart with mind, the female in us and the male, the darkness and the light. That was the problem which engaged the spiritual intellect of the true alchemist. That was the Elixir, the Stone, the Gold ... aurum non vulgi — no common gold. They are all symbols for what cannot be said — only experienced.

Clarke 1990 p167

Echoing my fire and water metaphor Bleakley draws an analogy between the birth of a rainbow as the sun burns off the moisture of rain, and the birth of imagination, or visionary inspiration from the union of the fiery masculine spirit and the watery element of the feminine soul.

Where the fire of the masculine spirit, as the sun, maintains balance with the water of the feminine, as rain, we have noted that a rainbow may be birthed — the seven 'arrows' of colour.

Bleakley 1984 p21

He too sees this as the work of the alchemists *"to recreate the circumstances under which the rainbow of creative imagination appears"*.

Alchemy appears to me to be a spiritual activity, and I see that with this shift of consciousness I move beyond the injunction of Chapter 4 to take myself seriously, to a wider injunction to take the psychic world or the spiritual dimension seriously. This is a serious matter. This kind of alchemy will alter my life.

We are talking here about magic, mystery, and unseen forces. They repel and attract me, and it is not easy, consistently to take them seriously. When I first encountered goddess spirituality in Vicki Noble's group it was a paradoxical experience. The activities seemed on the one hand weird, heretical even, triggering all my patriarchal conditioning; on the other hand it also felt like a release and a homecoming, two more incommensurable paradigms coexisting inside me.

In Vicki's own words:

Until we accept this [access to magic] as absolutely real, we will never fully understand what we are studying.

Noble 1991 p. 40 brackets mine

This is what I find difficult: I can believe it sporadically but then lose hold of it. So the gold thread of fire has been a difficult one to weave with, knotted with doubts at times but persistent nevertheless. I can see that this confusion stems partly from being a novice in the spiritual world, beginning to learn about psychic experience, just as back in 1983 I had to learn about my emotions. This is further complicated by the need to unlearn the view of the world that a patriarchal culture has taught me. So many books I have read give me the experience Spretnak vividly describes:

"the fixed entity that had been taught to me as 'history' disassembled along Interstate 40, and I saw ... that patriarchy is a cultural construct"

Spretnak 1993 p. 128

I find it helpful to consider that magic is the *"psychology/technology of immanence, of the understanding that everything is connected"* (Starhawk 1990) and that *"the most basic fundamental tool of magic is the body"* (Noble 1991).

Everything felt, seen, or experienced on other planes can be translated through the body into the concrete physical realm. The body is the vessel that houses all the energies and forces needed to do anything we might imagine ...

Noble 1991 p. 40

This makes sense to me, reflecting not only the way of life of Native American people who have kept their close connection to Nature, but also my own very limited experience. This process is one of tuning in to information that we tune out most of the time. It is simply reconnection, but the path is overgrown and the gate so rusty that it feels supernatural rather than natural. So practice is required, involving more of what I have already been doing, listening to my body, listening to the gaps between words, seeing the ground behind the figure, and allowing information to come in from the unconscious through dreams and tarot work. It is my way of seeking constructed knowledge as a passionate knower:

making the unconscious conscious, ... consulting and listening to the self, ... voicing the unsaid, ... listening to others and staying alert to all the currents and undercurrents of life ...

Belenky et al. 1986 p. 141

Alchemy has a particular message for relationships between men and women, since it depends upon *"correct understanding of the male and female principles ..., of separating*

them and uniting them in harmony ..." (Gilchrist 1991) It is no coincidence that, as I write, I am surrounded by books speaking of union: the alchemical wedding between the female and the male in us; the gylanic partnership of Riane Eisler's vision; and the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God (Baring and Cashford). They all speak of the paradox of relationship in terms of the creative "and ... and" tension between intimacy and independence discussed in chapter four and referred to earlier in this chapter. My recent experience tells me not only that it is possible to transcend the conflict, but that the tension itself is a necessary part of the transformative process.

Bleakley (1984) refers to the creative tension between men and women in terms of a piece of elastic held between them. If they "*fuse crudely*" before attaining differentiated wholeness, they will be too close, the elastic will be slack and "*no note can be played*". Equally if they are too far apart it will snap with the same result. With optimum tension a creative range of notes is available and the relationship becomes "*a vehicle for exquisite music*".

Making Space for the Sacred

The sacred what? The sacred everything. The sacred creation ...

Fox 1988 p. 8

If I believe, along with Eisler, Spretnak, Long, Berman, Heron, and many others, that the world desperately needs the understanding, wisdom and energy of connection if it is to survive, the next problem is how to translate this understanding in a way that makes it meaningful to others. For most people are at least as entrenched in the patriarchal perspective as I was. If in addition, they are stressed by high pressure jobs, responsibility for children, violent marriages, unemployment, poor housing, or financial insecurity, they are likely to see such ideas as esoteric luxuries.

Roger Harrison sub-titled a Focus Paper for the Association for Management Education and Development (AMED) "a strategy for releasing love in the workplace", and that sub-title, as much as the ideas contained in the paper, made a profound impact on me. Harrison quotes here from a response to his original idea:

I mean, 'love' in a high performance organisation? That's tossing a hot potato into a cold/cool medium. Even if you do warm things up with atunement, can you ever warm it up to 'love' level and still keep an eye on the business? ... It seems to me, Roger, that using the term love ... stirs up people's deepest hurts and longings, and how you can meet their expectations and run a railroad at the same time is beyond me.

Harrison 1987 p3

I know that I frequently stir people's deepest hurts and longings on development courses. To refer back to the seeding of this inquiry (described at the beginning of Chapter 2), it is not a question of "dealing with" distress when it emerges, but of acting as a catalyst for feeling: that is, creating the conditions which make it possible and likely that interactions will drop below the surface of conventional behaviour into the Feeling mode. Only from a position of connection can I do that empathically, responsibly, and with a chance of helping people to make healing connections that they can continue to develop. For, tied up with the hurts and longings, are the hopes and energy required for running a railroad, and a world, *better*. When I first read Harrison's paper I could not conceive of "releasing love", and one measure of my growth in confidence is my use of the term love in a growing number of contexts.

The stressed people I want to reach all have needs, and if, to return once again to my favourite model, I meet them on the level of the needs of the triangle of Love, Understanding, and Freedom, and dare, like Harrison to speak of love, we share a common language. Like Maslow later in his life, I am now ready, having learnt to use the "L" word, to give myself the further challenge of promoting the "S" word. The word I choose is not spiritual, but sacred. I can help people to make sacred space in their lives on a small scale, as my husband, Hugh, would say, to make the ordinary extraordinary. I already do this without naming it, referring to time which is their own for reflection and connection, but naming it and demonstrating it is the next important step. We already honour the sacredness of being human in a group by the respect we cultivate, and that needs naming too.

I can also take a lesson from my own messages of vulnerability above, and from the walnut tree in my garden. I was told that walnut is for protection in the Bach flower scheme. As I lay on my back under the tree recently, I was basking in its grace and beauty and reflecting that it was strange to find protection in a tree that is itself so vulnerable. For when, in ignorance, we pruned it recently, we discovered it weeping from all the cut branches which had to be bound to stem the loss of sap. The capacity to be vulnerable and to offer protection do go together. And one way of giving permission for the sacred in people's lives, and strengthening and supporting them in their search for ways to accommodate it, is to share my experience of friendship with the walnut tree. Some may laugh, but some, including some who laugh, may find a meaning in that which they can use.

With Alex Darken in the *Chymical Wedding* I reflect that

... it must be possible ... to build new bridges between an affirmation of the spirit and a sane, social pragmatism increasingly aware of its own unconscious roots. I was aware too that all opposition would not be ... tolerant and congenial ... and that an immense faith was required in the power of the small.

Clarke 1990 p. 501

Spretnak makes an impassioned plea to her readers to “find a way” (Spretnak 1993) to build such bridges. I can only start to look for such a way from where I am at the centre. Finding a place for the sacred at that centre is the starting point. I referred earlier, echoing May Sarton, to my need for personal space in order to know who I am, and what is going on.

That is what is strange — that friends, even passionate love, are not my real life unless there is time alone in which to explore and discover what is happening or has happened.

Sarton 1985 p.1

In my personal life I am fortunate to have found someone with whom I know who I am, but in my facilitation role, I still need to make personal space to keep that connection alive. I used to regard this as a weakness, but strongly and positively reframe it now as maintaining the sacred at my centre which may then form part of the shared sacred space in the centre of a group, which group members in turn may then take with them, spiralling out, widening the circle as they go.

Find a way, implores Spretnak:

Find a way that dissolves the deeply ingrained patterns of negative, distrustful behaviour caused by past cruelty and disappointment. ... Find a way that grounds your deeds in wisdom, equanimity, compassion, and lovingkindness. Find a way that reveals to you the joy of our profound unity, the interrelatedness of you and every being, every manifestation of the unfolding universe. ... Then we would have a chance.

Spretnak 1993 p. 78

Let us put the sacred at the centre. Let us make the ordinary extraordinary.

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